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CHRISTMAS BALANCE SHEET

IT is a poor heart which never rejoices; and most British families have rightly decided to enjoy Christmas this year, not in a "To-morrow We Die" spirit of feverish merriment, but with the feeling that, so far as its internal efforts are concerned, Britain has earned its turkey, and that the prospect which lies ahead, when the candles have burnt out on the tree and the decorations have been providently tucked away for another year, has gleams of light. As Sir Stafford Cripps told Parliament, the British people have "responded magnificently" to the demands made on them. With the 1947 coal target reached, steel output expanding and signs even of increased production in the laggard textile industries, the overall picture of Britain's internal economy is substantially more favourable than seemed likely in the dark days ten months ago when the coal and electricity crisis, brought to a head by unforgiving weather, came near to paralysing our industrial life. Sir Stafford is not the man to view the nation's problems through rosy spectacles; and when he proclaimed that there was no need for pessimism with regard to the outlook, he gave the country a mandate, with which few will quarrel, for a truce to austerity at this season. Moreover, since he spoke, both Mr. Strachey and Mr. Wilson have had good news to impart: a welcome pact has been concluded for a large-scale purchase by Britain of the 1947-48 Australian wheat harvest, and an agreement has been signed with Sweden which should facilitate a considerable extension next year of her trade with Britain.

Yet, though the question need not obtrude on Christmas dinner tables, it is as well that we should bear in mind that, whatever may have been the means of payment whereby the domestic turkey effected to the Celestial Stubble the sacrificial transit which Mr. Pudney celebrates on a later page, the (more numerous) imported turkeys have, in fact, been bought on credit. Like the increased ration of bacon promised for the first three months of 1948, their procurement rests on a gamble that, before next summer, we shall be able to dig our fingers in the Marshall pie. Indeed, when we turn from the satisfactory evidence of increased British production to the debit and credit items in next year's balance of foreign payments, the extent to which the Government is relying on Marshall Plan aid becomes painfully obvious. The trade returns for the month of November begin at last to show the effect of the cuts in the import programme, but exports can, at best, be said to be steady. It looks as though the estimate made by the Government last February in its *Economic Survey for 1947* will be just about realised so far as the export target of £1,200 millions is concerned; but imports seem likely to be £200 millions greater than the projected figure of £1,450 millions—an increase due largely to the rise in world prices. When allowance is made for the "invisibles" on both sides of the account, the 1947 deficit will be approximately £550 millions overall, but the deficit in relation to the Western hemisphere is unlikely to be much less than £800 millions. For 1948, Sir Stafford Cripps estimated last week that outgoings would be £1,600 millions for imports, plus £100 millions for Government expenditure—a total of £1,700 millions. To meet this, he forecast income from "invisibles" of £130 millions, and from exports of £1,550 millions. If his export target were realised, an overall balance would be approximately reached; but the required rise in exports looks exceedingly formidable, and—unless more of our trade is re-orientated away from the dollar area—our deficit with the Western hemisphere will, on the most sanguine calculations, be at least £300 millions.

In fact, without Marshall aid, the national economic budget on which we are planning our life for 1948 is too bad to be true. In what form and with what attendant conditions such aid will eventually be forthcoming we shall not know until Congress has dealt with President Truman's Economic Co-operation Act, whose main features we discuss on another page. Everything depends on whether Congress will have the vision to realise that aid which increases Europe's economic dependence on American industry would be ultimately destructive, and that "strings" which preclude the reconstruction of the Continent on planned Socialist lines, or which tend to sharpen the breach between West and East, would evoke ultimately popular resistances fatal to Europe's genuine recovery.

Anglo-Canadian Trade

It would be too much to say that the Liesching Mission has solved the problem of Anglo-Canadian trade relations: what the agreement signed last week in Ottawa does is to tide matters over for three months. The fact had to be faced that Canada, with her own dollar reserves approaching exhaustion point, could no longer afford to supply Britain with goods on credit at the rate which she has hitherto generously maintained. Provision is now made for the continuance of the wheat agreement and for further contracts (at higher prices) for deliveries of Canadian livestock and dairy produce to Britain; and there will be continued supplies—on a reduced scale—of basic raw materials, such as timber and non-ferrous metals, from Canada to the United Kingdom. On present expectations, this trade will result in a deficit of 145 million dollars in Britain's balance of payments with Canada up to the end of March. Towards bridging this gap Canada will lend a further 45 million dollars from the unexpired portion of her credit to Britain; the rest must be provided by Britain in American dollars. This is a commitment which we can hardly afford to sustain beyond next March; and the prospect is that we shall have to forgo some Canadian supplies next year unless either we can succeed in increasing our exports to Canada of goods, such as textiles, not excluded by Canada's recent enforced import restrictions, or Marshall Plan aid takes, in part, the form of dollars available for the purchase by the recipients of foods and raw materials from Canada as well as the United States.

Costs of Bizonia

In agreeing to a revised apportionment of the costs of Bizonia, the United States have driven a hard bargain. On the assumption that the 1948 gap between Bizonia's imports and exports will

be of the order of £200 millions, payable for the most part in hard currencies, Britain is now relieved of a liability amounting to about 300 million dollars. This, of course, is a welcome gain; but the price is stiff. Not only does America now assume a controlling voice in the Joint Export-Import and Foreign Exchange Agencies—in whose service a curious recruit in the person of Dr. Schacht has now apparently been enrolled—but the British Government has still to shoulder considerable financial and physical responsibilities. We have to provide Bizonia, next year, with goods from the sterling area to the value of about £20 millions, as well as bearing the whole costs of our own Occupation Forces and Control Staff; we have to provide ships, which might otherwise be earning dollars, to carry 144 cargoes from the United States to Germany in 1948; and, not only do we underwrite (in dollars) the present sterling balance of the Export-Import Agency, but we undertake the undefined liability of converting into dollars such future sterling balances as the Agency may accumulate. This means, in short, that the sterling area will in future have to pay dollars for what it imports from Germany: to all intents and purposes Germany becomes part of the dollar area. If this stipulation is to apply to Germany's foreign trade with the rest of the Sixteen Nations, a large spanner seems to be thrown into the machinery of European economic co-operation.

Polish Socialists

The Annual Congress at Wroclaw last week of the Polish Socialist Party ended, as expected, in reaffirmation of the policy of close collaboration with the (Communist) Workers' Party in a united working-class front. But, though no speaker suggested that Polish Socialists should play the part of a Third Force, there was no disposition in the Congress to take the view that the Party should abandon its independence. The Polish Premier, Mr. Cyrankiewicz, who is secretary of the Socialist Party, emphasised that the Party's immediately important role would be to secure the adhesion of "hesitating" middle-class elements who had been disconcerted and disillusioned by the disintegration of Mr. Mikolajcyk's Peasant Party, and who now lacked positive political affiliations. Attending the Congress as a fraternal delegate, Mr. Gomulka, the Communist leader, said nothing to indicate that he favoured a fusion of the two parties. On the contrary, he said that, just as there was friendly competition between groups of workers in the factories, so the Communist and Socialist Parties should compete as educators of the working class in the struggle to defend "economic democracy" in Poland against reaction. Whatever may be the ultimate result of a policy of practical collaboration, it seems clear that neither the Communist nor the Socialist leaders want to impose fusion as a Diktat from above.

The Trade Unions and the Crisis

The T.U.C. General Council has held up publication of the report of its Economic Committee until the New Year, when it will form the basis for a general discussion with the Government about wage and price policy. Forecasts indicate that the report lays great stress on price stabilisation as essential to the acceptance of any general policy about wages, even to the extent of mutual consultations between the unions about their wage claims. In the meantime the General Council has issued a carefully worded resolution welcoming the Marshall Plan, provided that there are no strings attached to it which infringe the sovereignty of the States concerned. This resolution is meant to guide the T.U.C. delegates at the meeting of the Bureau of the W.F.T.U., which is to be held next February for consideration of the whole matter. The resolution will hardly satisfy either the Soviet trade unions and the other delegations from Eastern Europe, or the French majority, though it has evidently been drafted with the idea of going as far as possible to meet their views. Least of all will the opponents of the Marshall Plan like the proposal that the trade union movements of the countries concerned in it shall meet to "examine the practical steps to be taken to ensure the most effective utilisation of such aid." It is, indeed, difficult to see how the W.F.T.U. can be held together in face of the sharp differences which divide trade unions, as well as Socialist parties, over American aid—unless it can make up its mind to shelve the issue and to go under cover in the hope that a change in the world situation may revive its usefulness. This would probably be the best course, if the disputants could be persuaded to agree to it; for the continuance of links between the trade union movements of all European countries may have its value, not only in the future, but also here and now in preventing ideological splits within the national movements.

The Best They Can Do?

Walter Elliot's beautiful Scots voice could not disguise the difficulties he had encountered in composing his party broadcast. He is not much of a party man; a Fabian at one period, a scientist in his approach to politics, a convinced planner and always an "intellectual," how could he carry conviction as the champion of a Conservative Party still acknowledging the leadership of Mr. Churchill? Challenged by Herbert Morrison to say what "controls" the Conservatives would abolish if they came to power, he attacked bread-rationing, the abolition of "basic," the ban on travelling in Western Europe, and the direction of labour. As to tourists, we agree about travelling to non-dollar areas, and should expect this blanket prohibition to be changed. As to direction of labour, no one likes it, but the question to-day is whether the Government, in its care for our liberties, has been drastic enough in "direction." For Elliot to choose these four examples, while implicitly accepting the need for the broad economic planning of the nation's economy, was to remove any serious difference of principle between himself and the Government. He must have been perfectly aware that the Labour programme so far has not split the country in any vital sense. The Government might have ridden rough-shod over the propertied class, but it has done nothing of the kind. So far the House of Commons has been mainly carrying through what were virtually agreed measures. There has been no real battle as there might be, for instance, about steel. The real purport of Walter Elliot's broadcast was a plea that the Government should not begin on a Socialist programme which would make a coalition of Tories and Labour impossible in the future.

Mr. Bevan and the Doctors

Mr. Aneurin Bevan is justified in complaining, as he does in the circular which he has addressed to individual doctors, that hardly any major step to better social services has provoked more mis-statements or misunderstandings than the National Health Service Act. The medical profession, as it finds expression through the B.M.A. and the Negotiating Committee, has been more mercenary than dignified. As the *Lancet* points out, the Negotiating Committee, instead of discussing how the Act can be made to work, have spent the past nine months in elaborating a case for its amendment. Gargling platitudes about doctor-patient relationships (which, as the Minister points out, are fully protected under the Act) they have, in fact, reduced the issue to one on which they can scarcely expect public sympathy—the question of the sale of practices. "The ownership of goodwill," they contend, "is regarded by the medical profession as fundamental to its freedom." The patient, who is thus treated as a ledger entry, is scarcely likely to rally indignantly to the defence of the doctors' flesh-and-blood royalties. Mr. Bevan has met or contraverted every other major challenge of the doctors. Indeed, the advocates of a State Medical Service in his own party may have more reason to complain than the B.M.A. . One of his concessions, for instance, is to the consultant staff of the national hospitals, who are to be allocated beds for private patients without even a maximum charge being stipulated. Certainly, the doctors have no reason to complain about the scale of remuneration which the National Health Service will provide. A general practitioner, exclusive of receipts from private practice which he is still allowed to continue, will earn £1,058 if he has a thousand public patients, rising to £3,332 if he has four thousand patients. Of that, £300 is a guaranteed basic salary and the rest is on a capitation basis. Moreover, there is an "inducement payment" to attract doctors to difficult areas. It is naive, therefore for the *British Medical Journal* to ask whether in refusing to make further concessions and amend his Act, the Minister is "governed chiefly by political considerations." In the doctors' plebiscite, which is to be held next month, it is the medical profession, not the Minister, which is on trial.

PARLIAMENT: The Royal Salary

Friday

In the debate on the income to be paid to Princess Elizabeth and her husband there were few Members who expressed republican, or even sharply radical, sentiments. Yet it was the old opposition of the earlier Socialists to the panoply of royalty, living again among the majority of the Labour Party, that caused the trouble. Added to it was the feeling that the House and the country were in some way being put upon by not knowing any of the details of the expenses that demanded £50,000 a year. Chamberlain argued very reasonably for a moderate personal allowance, together with an expense account to be met by the Treasury. Hogg countered this by a vision of the Royal couple being obliged by a Treasury official, when entertaining the French Ambassador to lunch, to serve Australian burgundy. Eden remarked that the proposed income compared unfavourably with that of our diplomatic representatives in view of the obligatory substantial contributions to charity, upon which Cobb suggested that we might hold a flag day for them. The most forcible case for a more austere standard was put by Maurice Webb who, in a dignified speech, hinted at a compromise on the lower figure almost reached, and then abandoned, in the Select Committee. 162 Labour Members then supported him in the Lobby—all but a handful of whom approved of the Monarchy but wanted it more nearly to reflect the spirit of the times.

On Thursday Bevin quietly and sadly read his long statement on the Foreign Ministers' Conference. Although he thought there was a shade of a possibility of getting agreement at some remote date, to the House it seemed as if the difficult wife, inconvenient in much but desirable in so many of her aspects, had had the final row and left home for good. In the Recess there will be an opportunity to consider how to deal with the reorganisation consequent upon such an absolute change, long expected but never wholly believed in.

To give the House a little Christmas cheer, Cripps, in his last speech of the year, stressed some of the pleasing achievements of production, as well as explaining the capital investment cuts and reiterating the dangers of our external position. The debate that followed was not an interesting one. Sir Richard Acland misfired with a delivery that might have suited the electoral excitement of Gravesend, but which was out of place in a nearly empty House. Macmillan was also off form, devoting half his remarks to questions critical of the Government, and the other half to propositions, loudly cheered by the Socialists, leading to the inescapable conclusion that the Government was an excellent one. The treat of the evening was provided by Nye Bevan who, with a beautiful mastery over the Tories, provoked them into serving him up a series of gentle lobs in the form of interruptions reminiscent of Low's "Blimp."

WOODROW WYATT

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

PRESIDENT TRUMAN has certainly learnt a great deal in the past year about the functions of a minority President faced with a hostile Congress. His old disastrous tactic was to meet opposition half way, and, since this appeasement never worked, to get only a quarter of what he asked. His latest message to Congress—on the European Recovery Programme—makes almost no concessions to Congressional paltriness, but puts forward a reasoned and detailed plan, in which the emphasis is on "Recovery not Relief," and therefore on the necessity of authorising (though not appropriating) funds for the whole four-year period on which the original Paris proposals were based.

There are points in the statement which call, some for praise, some for caution. The clause welcoming East-West trade in Europe is helpful, if it is an indication that the Administration, at last, realises that America alone cannot save Europe, and that a divided Europe cannot be saved. The demand for strategic raw materials, which the United States Government could stockpile, has been renewed, but without the crippling suggestion that they should be supplied free, and thus permanently reduce the possibility of European nations earning more dollars. Then there is the stipulation that aid in the form of machinery and other capital goods must be repaid, but that relief in the shape of food and consumer goods will be "free," though its value must be collected by recipient States in local currency, over whose expenditure the U.S. Administrator will exercise a right of veto. On this our comment is, first, that the stipulation puts an undesirable premium on "consuming" the aid. If it is ever to stand on its own feet, Europe needs capital goods as well as food and American manufactures. Secondly, though it may be reasonable that Congress should insist on safeguards against inflationary fiscal policies based on receipt of unrequited imports, the demand that budgets should, in some part, have to secure American approval may be difficult to reconcile with national independence. There might well be an awkward struggle between American ideas of financial rectitude and the claims of full employment, or slum clearance, or even capital development.

The statement, in short, must be examined in sober mood—particularly since, at best, it offers no hope of escape from austerity for long years to come. Much can yet go wrong with the Plan in Congress; and the President's message has already been denounced by both a clever ex-isolationist like Senator Taft and a stupid ex-internationalist like Senator Ball. Already there is the regrettable fact that this attempt to put stricken Europe back on its feet should have to be made with half Europe self-excluded. In Communist eyes the Plan, in whatever guise it is finally approved, will be nothing but an imperialist plot to convert Western Europe into an advanced base for an Anglo-American onslaught on the Soviet Union. With this over-simplified diagnosis, which overlooks the fact that many Americans are actuated by altruistic generosity and that even the National Union of Manufacturers is thinking less of war than of markets, European Socialists need not agree; but they must be alive to the dangers of the Plan becoming a mere extension of the Truman Doctrine, as well as a real threat to the independent development of Western Europe on Socialist lines. They must, in fact, follow the advice given by Stalin to the Labour M.P.s who visited him at Sochi, and make the best of Two Worlds by trading with both but becoming politically dependent on neither.

Since the battle for Socialism in Western Europe is still far from won, and the immediate danger to democracy comes from the Right much more than from the Left, it follows that Socialists in Britain should take the initiative in seeking closer unity with their comrades in France, Scandinavia and the Low Countries and should try to reach with them an understanding on the terms which would make the European Relief Programme acceptable and the uses to which they must demand that dollars or their equivalent should be put. The struggle for Socialism in any one country is transformed by the potentialities—for good and evil—of the Marshall proposals into a struggle for Socialism throughout Western Europe.

FARMING AND THE BLACK MARKET

THE report on the black market in meat that a small committee is now preparing for Mr. Strachey is not likely to make sensational reading. Melodrama, indeed, is outside the terms of reference. The powerful car with the masked driver, which emerges from the farm gate at midnight, the head lights off and the curtains drawn, is still almost non-existent in this country. A few travelling "spivs" are now knocking on front doors and offering the farmer four or five times the current price for his bullocks, provided that they can be slaughtered on the farm; but virtually all the smaller livestock—for the moment it is only the pigs and poultry racket that is really serious—as well as most of the few sheep and cattle that are getting on to the black market, are bought alive at the ordinary markets in a perfectly legal way. The expert black-marketeer only steps outside the law in the later stages of his operations, when he slaughters without a licence and sells the meat above the controlled prices.

It is this partial protection provided by a chink in the armour of control that explains why there is a big black market in meat and not one in cream, for example, or butter. The chink is a difficult one to close. It derives from the fact that there are two markets to which a farmer can send his livestock. If they are fat and ready for killing, he sends them to the Ministry of Food's grading centres, where he is paid a controlled price based on quality and dead weight. But if he is primarily a breeder or a rearer, he sends his stock to the stores markets, which come under the supervision of the Ministry of Agriculture, where they are sold by auction to the highest bidder and so pass into the possession of the fattening or finishing side of the industry. It is the stores markets that the black-marketeers have been invading. There, by paying something like twice as much for a three-quarters-fat pig as its fat brothers are making at the grading centres, they are attracting into the stores markets animals that would never in normal times have found their way there at all.

The economic remedy might seem to be to control prices in the stores markets as well as the fat-stock markets. But so many factors are concerned—breed, pedigree, age, condition and sex, to say nothing of the different values that the same animal will have as breeding stock or for fattening—that it would be practically impossible to draw up an equitable scale of guaranteed prices. The only effective step that can be taken is to follow up the animals for whom these fancy prices are paid when they leave the market. The C.I.D. have now been enrolled in the war against the black market, and with their assistance the Ministry of Food's enforcement officers should soon be able to bring the bigger men to book. Hitherto there has been much too much official inertia. When questions were asked at the markets the auctioneers have accepted too readily the story that the pigs, for example, were for resale to domestic pigkeepers. (A legend that some of the nastier auctioneers are now propagating is that the black-marketeer's real clients are those *nouveaux riches* the coal miners.) And in the few prosecutions that have taken place the fines of £100 or so have been far too small to act as effective deterrents.

Mr. Strachey's headache, though a bad one while it lasts—there is no doubt that the bacon ration is in some danger—need not be a long one. Although some farmer-to-neighbour black marketing will persist as long as there is any rationing, it should not be difficult to persuade the large-scale operators, who are doing the real damage, to turn their talents to something a good deal less risky. But when the bootleggers and the hi-jackers have departed, or even before, the Government would be well advised to hold an informal inquest into the episode. It is an instructive example of the dangers that a Government may run into when trying to achieve a Socialist end by capitalist means. It is also a reminder of how precarious the structure is on which Mr. Tom Williams's four-year plan for our agriculture depends.

The Coalition Government obtained a remarkable increase in our agricultural output during the war by the provision of two incentives—the carrot of generous guaranteed prices and the stick of ploughing orders and evictions. Farmers, who are a vocal and well-organised community, liked the carrot but objected strenuously to the stick. And so, when peace came and with it a Government of the farmers' political enemies, it was natural for the National Farmers' Union to persuade the Ministry of Agriculture, and for the Ministry to persuade its Minister, that the carrot should be kept and the stick dropped. "In the main," as Mr. Williams puts it in this September's issue of *The Land Worker*, "the planning of agricultural production in the future must be achieved through the operation of the price mechanism." In other words, the physical controls exercised so effectively during the war by the County Agricultural Executive Committees are now to become dead letters, and production is to be "steered" into the appropriate channels by differential prices.

The question that must be faced—one to which too little attention has been given by the Labour Party—is whether in fact an agricultural price mechanism will work without physical controls. And the moral of the black market in meat seems to be that it will not. The logical basis of the two markets for fat and store stock, one with and one without price ceilings, has been the assumption that the animals which the community's interest requires in one market could not under any foreseeable circumstances be diverted into the other. The black-marketeers have now blown that assumption sky-high. It is clear that without the physical control of a check-up on the ultimate destination of the stock bought in the stores markets, the economic balance of the Minister's plan can easily be upset with disastrous repercussions not only on meat costs but also on future supplies.

A one-sided reliance on the price mechanism is especially dangerous in agricultural planning because farming is so "mixed." The departments interlock, and almost every animal on the farm is "dual-purpose"—milk and beef, mutton and wool, eggs and table-birds. The slightest swing, therefore, in the prospects of profitability (due perhaps to a factor outside the planner's control, such as a wet autumn) may initiate a trend, e.g., from wheat to barley or from milk to beef, that is the opposite of what the planner really wants. And by the time the situation is realised the season has been lost.

An example of this is the Government's cattle and sheep targets for 1952, which have been jeopardised by an external factor much more serious than the black market, viz., last summer's drought and the consequent shortage of winter-keep now. When agricultural prices were raised in the early autumn the seriousness of this factor was not realised, and beef and mutton prices went up with the others. But the result has been that the grading centres have been filled with breeding ewes and bulling heifers, the potential mothers of Mr. Williams's future flocks and herds. The farmers had realised that it would be a good deal

less profitable for them to buy the hay and roots that they needed to carry their breeding stock through the winter. And from their own point of view they were probably right.

The price mechanism *ought* to have seen to it that the profit-motive and the community's interest pulled the same way. In fact, in this case, a tug-of-war has developed, with the community on the losing side. But if the price mechanism had been supplemented by physical controls, a special allocation of feeding-stuffs rations, for example, or an arrangement for temporary adjustment by the County Committees, the slaughter of breeding stock could certainly have been reduced. The position with next season's wheat is similar. Apparently many of the English counties have not reached their target acreages for winter wheat and the prospects of making up the deficiency with spring wheat, always an unpopular crop, without the service of specific directions by the County Committees—a physical control that Mr. Williams dislikes—are remote in the extreme.

If the black-marketeers in meat prove to have convinced Mr. Williams, who is in many ways an admirable Minister, that the price mechanism is not enough, their dirty work will not have been in vain. It must be admitted, nevertheless, that the combination of guaranteed prices and detailed supervision that seems necessary to implement an agricultural plan cannot be contemplated with much enthusiasm. It will work, but in a cumbrous, paper-wasting, temper-trying sort of way. And it will probably involve the Minister in a continuous guerilla war with the National Farmers' Union. And there *is* another way out. Has not the time come perhaps for a reconsideration of the case for agricultural nationalisation? There is a good deal to be said for State farming on a considerable scale in certain areas—and not only on the Welsh hilltops and among the heaviest clays.

F. W. BATESON

A LONDON DIARY

MORGAN PHILLIPS' anti-Communist circular is the inevitable reply to Communist attacks on the Labour leaders and the implied threat of industrial trouble-making. I observe that Pollitt has given a special dispensation to Arthur Horner, arguing, quite illogically, that, whereas other increases in production will only benefit America, coal output is still of vital interest to the working class. The Communists are fairly strong in the electrical and engineering industries. They have used their influence against unauthorised strikes ever since 1941, and have been working quite sincerely for increased output. Now, under the new line, they will be asked presumably to take the lead wherever there are grievances in the workshops, and to treat the Labour Government as though it were a Tory Government. In view of the shortages of raw materials and the hold-up of factory rebuilding, they will have plenty of tactical opportunities for demanding action by the workers. But their difficulty will be to make many of them accept a strategy which involves the wrecking of British recovery in order to prevent it from being useful to the United States. I cannot believe that the more thoughtful British Communists themselves approve this policy; it seems to be an example of Marxist tactics based on a Soviet calculation that pays no attention to the needs of British workers and completely neglects two of the most powerful motives in the world—self-interest and patriotism. Inevitably the Labour Party takes up the challenge. The danger is that Labour will now be tempted to spend its energies in anti-Communism.

* * *

I often recall my last summer's conversations with Gomulka, Vice-Premier of Poland and now head of the Cominform, and with Modilewski, the Foreign Minister. There *was* and *would be* no Marshall Plan, they said; on the contrary, there would be an American slump. They said that Washington would not give money to countries in the Soviet sphere, but they had nothing to answer when I asked why, therefore, the Eastern States did not go to the Paris Conference? In that case there would have been no Marshall Plan; that would have been the sure way to wreck it, and, if they had put up reasonable proposals for Europe, they would have won prestige everywhere. As it has turned out, there *is* going to be a Marshall Plan, carried through in the most dangerous way, on a wave of anti-Soviet excitement in circumstances that make it impossible for the workers to refuse its benefits. It is the Russians and their allies who have made the Marshall Plan a reality.

* * *

In Berlin recently I had a long talk with Jacob Kaiser, chairman of the Christian Democrats in the Soviet Zone. The Russian demand for his dismissal fits only too well with their present policy of tightening Communist control throughout Eastern Europe. We are in one of those phases of Soviet policy when fear of Western encroachment or even of war leads them to abandon any pretence of collaboration with any who are independent. Kaiser is certainly an independent and a strong man. In many ways I thought him typically German; rather stiff and very much a nationalist as well as a Catholic. But he is also a real realist, believes that he ought to hold on, and, in spite of Soviet restrictions, maintain his party's position and independent existence in the Soviet Zone. He wanted all the co-operation with the Russians that they would accept. The Social Democrats have been critical of his readiness to work with the Russians. Denied independent existence themselves in the Russian Zone, they held that the Christian Democrats were helping the Russians to maintain a democratic façade by continuing as a party, and fighting the elections in the limited number of seats permitted them. Well, Kaiser will not, I suppose, be much longer faced with any of these problems; the Socialist Unity Party, run by the Communists, will have everything its own way in the Russian Zone.

* * *

I was interested to hear the reactions of a Russian Colonel, now correspondent for a Soviet Military Administration newspaper in Germany, who was taken by a friend to the House of Commons. Our parliamentary system he found a shade too traditional—an impression particularly easy to form on the day on which obituary eulogies came from all sides of the House, including Willy Gallacher, on Lord Baldwin. He had also just seen Members bowing low as the Speaker's procession went by, and attempts to convince him that respect for the Speaker was a symbol of the independence of the Commons from the Monarchy fell flat. Question time he thought a good institution, but he could not understand why so many M.P.s asked such fiddling questions on minor details. They ought to realise that the Parliament of a great country cannot concern itself with administration on a petty level. Available energy should be directed to larger and more important ends. His criticisms of England seemed to be concentrated on the poor service and the worse food of London residential hotels. He was greatly disappointed with general living conditions, which he had been told were high but which he felt were lower, particularly in food, than those of Russia. His pleasure with England centred on the people and Hyde Park. The freedom to express opinions was exciting to him although he was not sure that *every one* who spoke from the soap-box should have been allowed to say what they did.

* * *

The Labour movement is in danger of becoming so obsessed with Communism that it forgets the Fascist tyranny in Spain. I heard recently that in 1947, nearly eight years after the end of the civil war, the number of admitted political executions in Spain amounted to more than 200. A number of well-known Englishmen, including G. D. H. Cole, M.P.s, and prominent trade unionists have sent a telegram in an effort to save the life of the latest victim, Augustin Zoroa, the famous underground leader. The newspapers report that the Pope may also intervene on Zoroa's behalf.

* * *

The report on the Dalton affair provides no element of surprise. If any one of three experienced and usually sensible people had not all on the same afternoon combined to behave with almost incredible folly no incident would have occurred. As it is, Mr. Dalton is out of a job. He is also probably rather more popular than he has ever been before because the British public is always on the side of a man when he is down, especially if he shows up well in adversity, as Dalton has, and takes the rap without complaining or attempting to put the blame on other people. Dalton, I should say, will soon be eligible for office again.

* * *

My first flat in London was a tiny attic looking out over the Foundlings' Hospital. I naturally became interested in its fate, then being hotly discussed. I watched the foundlings themselves departing for the country and the Hospital being pulled down. I wrote my first newspaper article on the subject. I believe it was a gift from Lord Rothermere that finally enabled the various children's welfare societies to save the site as a playground. It was opened as Coram's Fields in 1936 by the Queen (then Duchess of York) as a trust "for the use and enjoyment of the children of London for all time to come." It is now the only remaining playground and open space in this part of London, accessible to L.C.C. schools and children's organisations. But it is scarcely fit to be used: the buildings were badly knocked about in the blitz and more damage was done during a variety of military occupations. The various Government departments are doing their bit to restore the damage and they are being helped by the Pilgrim Trust, the Goldsmiths' Company and other charitable bodies. But the sum of money available is still quite inadequate to restore and modernise the buildings and put the playground into repair. Admiral Godfrey, Chairman of the Executive Committee, informs me that the object is now to make the site into an up-to-date children's community centre. This I should guess is the type of charity that Professor Laski and other Socialists would approve.

* * *

Talking of children at Christmas, a party I wish I could attend is to take place at the Kingsway Hall on Saturday, December 27. The particular interest of the occasion is not that the Lord Mayor of London and the Mayor of Holborn will be there in full ceremonial state—which will surely be a bit deflating for the Father Christmas—but that the party is one of the international children's schemes about which Lady Allen of Hurtwood wrote in this journal last week. The English organisation is called *International Help for Children* (43 Parliament Street, S.W.1) and the corresponding Belgian organisation is called *Souvenir*. At this party representatives of the Belgian Government as well as of the British Council will be present; each of the 500 British children from the London area will be given 1 lb. of chocolate by the Belgians, who are also issuing an invitation to 500 children from British blitzed towns to visit Belgium in 1948. A small affair? Of course, but it will not be a small affair if *International Help for Children* and similar bodies on the Continent can succeed, as they hope to do, in making the international exchange of children's holidays a regular feature of a slowly recovering Europe.

* * *

Last week, when I decided to see *M. Verdoux* again, I found that the Tivoli was sold out. The new incarnation of Charlie Chaplin has proved enormously popular in London, in contrast with New York, where it was a complete frost. This is not surprising. Judged by current American standards, *M. Verdoux* must be one of the most subversive films ever produced. The story of the bank clerk who lost his job in the slump and decided to earn his living according to the strict ethics of capitalism is an attack on the American

way of life, all the more effective because it is played against a French background and so cannot be described as Communist propaganda or as anti-American activity. I can well understand the frustrated fury of the first-night audience in New York, who were compelled to sit through this brilliant defence of the thesis that under free enterprise business is murder and murder is business, provided that the murders are numerous enough. How excellently Chaplin shows that there is nothing inconsistent according to capitalist ethics in combining a humane and tender home life with murder as a method of earning money! In the age of progress, the little man with the bowler hat faced disaster with single-minded optimism. History has now transformed him into the split personality of M. Verdoux, a menace to society because he acts according to its inherent contradictions. And the trouble is that the new Chaplin film is not a boring "morality," but first-rate entertainment, a blend of comedy, slapstick, pathos and macabre adventure more mature and more brilliantly produced than any previous Chaplin film. That London loves it and New York cannot tolerate it illustrates the psychological abyss between the Old World and the New. Over here, Chaplin is speaking to people whose experiences have taught them to accept his premises, who are not offended when the condemned man warns his judges that they, too, have been accomplices in mass murder and may soon join him below. They laugh and cry with M. Verdoux because he reflects their own innermost scepticism and faith. But in America he can only be accepted at the cost of knocking down illusions which are still cherished. CRITIC

THIS ENGLAND

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Eventually Easter Saturday was agreed upon, and advice was sought by D. M. Brodie, the Oxford president, from the Bishop of London as to whether the Church would object to [Boat Race] practice on Good Friday. The reply was reassuring. The Bishop, an Oriel man, took the view that the last outing was always light, and necessitated only a brief appearance on the river.—*Sunday Times.* (Venice Baker, London.)

Mr. Registrar Friend, speaking . . . at Clerkenwell county court to-day:

"I find it difficult to assess his capacity to repay. He says he is an amateur stewed eel cooker and as an amateur he would lose his status if he earned money. But he has also admitted he is a lorry driver. Now he says he is on the dole. He also says he has a car.—*Star.* (L. Connelly, S.E.25.)

The Duke of Gloucester, by the way, is called Clapper in the family circle, on account of his habit of attracting the attention of servants or his children by clapping his hands.—*Sunday Pictorial.* (Miss N. Robins, London, N.W.8.)

"I never meant to do her any harm," Spellman told the judge, "and I was the first to pull her out."

The judge said: "You must not go shoving Mrs. —— into the canal every time she takes her dog for a walk."

"Oh no, sir," said Spellman indignantly. "I wouldn't see the dog drown."—Report in *News Chronicle.* (Mrs. A. P. Spalding, Swansea.)

A marriage at Merthyr. Stipendiary magistrate to a woman who sought a maintenance order:

Do you love your husband?

No. I married out of spite. I have been let down twice. I determined the next man who asked me had had it.—Daily Graphic. (Gerald J. Tutty, Reading.)

PETER PANTOMIME

Children, when the nursery blind rolls up, on the Never Land, you have to see it, bang, with the Mermaid Lagoon, Pirate ship, Redskins, and the Pan Gang hang-out under the hollow trees, where the lost Tory boys, Quintin Hoggles, Tony Tootles and Pie-crust Woolly are waiting for Peter.

Tootles: I do wish Peter would come back. I am always afraid of the pirates when he's not here.

Hoggles (Signing the Industrial Charter in a round schoolboy hand):

I am not afraid of them, but I do want Peter to come with me to ram this down Clem Hook's throat. This will make their old Pirate's Charter look pretty sick.

Tootles: So will my Six Points too. If only I could toss my Six Points aboard, that'd teach 'em.

(Tinker Bell, the Tory Housewife Fairy, alights on Woolly's shoulder.)

Tinker: Where's Peter?

Woolly: In Marrakesh, of course.

Tinker: I do wish he was here.

Tootles: I say, Tink, be a sport and do something for me.

Tinker: I'm Peter's fairy. Why should I?

Tootles: It is for Peter, you silly ass! I just want you to smuggle my Six Points aboard the Pirate Ship.

Tinker: Smuggle them yourself.

Tootles: We can't move without the Captain, silly.

Hoggles: She's afraid.

Tinker: I'm not.

Tootles: Catch, then. *(He throws her a paper in the shape of a dart, and she tinkles off. A crowing is heard as of some victorious cock.)*

All: Peter!

(Peter Winston Pan flies down from the treetops making the V sign, followed by Wendy, Michael and John.)

Peter: I am back. Greetings, chums. Why do you not cheer?

(They cheer.)

Look, I have brought a Wendy and two more Lost Boys. I taught them to fly.

John: Can we join the gang? What are the rules?

Peter: I'm captain, and there are no rules. We just fight Clem Hook and his cut-throat crew.

Wendy: I like pirates.

Peter (sulking): All right, go to Hook and see how you like it. Perhaps you like austerity, bread and water and chains and shackles and walking the plank.

Wendy: O, I didn't mean it, Peter. O, what's that?

(It is a dreadful song, stealthily trumpeting the Pirates' approach.)

Avast, belay, the English brig
The Tories almost sank!
Now they must lend a hand to rig
Or we'll make them walk the plank.

Yo, ho, ho and a bottle of pop,
Come, shake those lazy bones,
We've got the Lost Boys on the hop
And we've called up Davy Jones.

Peter: The pirates! Come on, lam into them, boys.

Woolly: Half a minute, captain. What about some allies? We're only six, and we've got to get an anti-pirate front.

Hoggles: Let's have a shot at the mermaids. I do so want to catch the mermaids' vote.

Peter: It is awfully difficult to get the mermaids' vote. I know Megan Tiger Lily! There she is.

(He beckons to Tiger Lily who is skirting the lagoon with her scalping knife unsheathed.)

Tiger: See, the pirates! Tiger Lily have um scalps.

Peter: The Great White Father is glad to have redskins protecting his wigwam. Tiger Lily shall join Pan Gang.

Tiger (coldly): Me Liberal. No like anti-pirate front. Redskins fight lone fight. I have spoken.

Peter: Foolish female. The Great White Father has spoken.

(Tinker Bell flutters down from the treetops faintly tinkling, and falls at Peter's feet.)

Tink, what's the matter?

Tinker: My light's going out.

Peter: Tell me what happened. Is it the fuel cut? You boarded the pirate ship, yes? And they caught you and put you on rations? O brutal Hook! O, miserable Strakey! *(He rises and throws out his hands.)* Children, Tinker is fading for lack of calories. She says she will get well again if you believe in fairies. Do you believe in fairies?

Children (eating their Christmas bonuses): No! Stinker Bell!

Peter (sadly): I am afraid, Tinker, they don't believe in fairies. The children are all growing up and that's what's the matter with England. Now I'm awfully sorry, but I've got to fight it out with Hook.

Woolly: Yes, come on. Let's scuttle the pirate ship.

Peter: Scuttle? Odds, bobs, hammer and tongs, no! We'll call them out in single combat, Clem Hook, Gentleman Cripps, and Strakey, and brave those dark and sinister rascals face to face.

(The deck of the brig. Seen one way, bang, it's a pirate ship flying the jolly roger; seen another way, its His Majesty's flagship with the White Ensign at the mizzen. Hook is leaning against the mast smoking a double cigar. Beside him Gentleman Cripps is filling a sea-chest with doubloons and Strakey packaging fats for the crew. Peter and the Pan Gang fly down from the rigging.)

Hook: Back, you pauling spawn.

Peter: Give me that cigar, you dog.

Hook: Who are you?

Peter: I am the doodle-doo.

Hook (with curling lip): You *were* the doodle doo!

Peter: Boys, go below, release the slaves and knock off their fetters. This man is mine.

Hook: Back, you mice, you are outnumbered.

Strakey: Shall I cleave him to the brisket, Captain?

Hook: No, let him speak first.

Cripps: Let 'em all speak, it will do us no harm. Ha, ha.

Hoggles: Then I will read you my Industrial Charter.

Cripps: Pooh, 'tis but a leaf out of Hook's book.

Tootles: But you will jolly well hear my six points! Courageous leadership, the Never Empire, everybody free, basic comforts, property for all, no more pirates, and may the best man win. There!

Peter: I charge you, Clem Hook, with blockading the Never Land, imperilling our basic comforts, appropriating my cigar, and piracy.

Hook: I'm no pirate, spalpeen, I've got my mandate.

Peter: By a low-down party manœuvre.

Cripps: Piffle, Pan. Hook stands for industrial priorities—

Peter: Claptrap!

Cripps: Planning—

Peter: Red tape.

Cripps: Controls.

Peter: Unnecessary.

Cripps: Be your age.

Peter: Utopian!

Hook: Pipsqueak!

Peter: Doctrinaire! I challenge you to single combat.

Hook: Clem Hook does not cross blades with boys.

Woolly: Well, if we can't fight it out, let's sing it out.

Hook: Done!

(Hook and his crew burst into full-throated chorus of the National Anthem. The Pan Gang strike up with "He's a Jolly Good Fellow." The scene dissolves and changes to the Little House in the Treetops. Wendy is there looking somewhat older, but Peter is just the same.)

Wendy: Well, good-bye, Peter.

Peter: Good-bye. Do you like this house?

Wendy: It's very small.

Peter: But very compact. It's the only Portal left in the world.

Wendy (shyly): You will come for me next Never year, won't you, Peter? I'll have a vote then.

Peter: I had all the votes once, before Hook got his hooks into England.

Wendy: Cheer up, Peter. Remember, the year after that will be the General Election. (*She sails off on a broomstick.*)

Peter: An Election will be an awfully big adventure.

(*The house and treetops fade and Peter is left sitting on the air, playing Never music on his pipes.*)

SAGITTARIUS

LETTER TO A FRENCH SOCIALIST

Dear Comrade,

No! I was not surprised by the tone of your letter, or even by the bitterness of your question about our attitude to France. "Must the Labour Government be even more insular than a Conservative Government? Can it understand in time to save France?"

In a sense, the answer to your first question is "yes." Our Labour Government is rooted in the tradition of the British working-class. It will never exhibit the elegant Francophilism so fashionable between the wars in certain Conservative circles; and for that reason it will never betray France as badly when the test comes. It will only get rid of its insularity when it is clear beyond all doubt that the survival of the British people depends upon getting rid of it. When that happens, we shall begin to act as Europeans and—far more slowly and fumblingly—to think as Europeans. Once we do that, we shall never go back on it.

I believe that this moment is now very near. Léon Blum's speech on the "Third Force," with its outright condemnation of Gaullist and Communist dictatorships, excluded him from the Premiership. But it has had a profound influence over here. It came at the moment when the defeatists of the Right and of the extreme Left were confidently predicting the end of the French Republic and the final liquidation of the Socialists. Once again they were wrong. Blum's statement of what Socialist policy should be, and the role played by Daniel Mayer and Jouhaux during the recent crisis, seem to us to have atoned for the mistake of participating in the Schuman Government. You have won a breathing space for French democracy. But we realise that it is a very brief breathing space. If you are to withstand the next Communist offensive—and I am certain it is being prepared—then the tragic economic position of the French working-class must be bettered immediately, and you must be able to offer it a programme of recovery which is not purely Utopian.

Your immediate economic problem is something which we can do very little about. It must depend upon American aid. But the revival of faith in ultimate recovery is no less important; and here, at long last, the interests of the French and the British working-class coincide. That is why the Third Force—to the fury of the Communists and their friends—is now being more and more widely accepted over here as the only possible basis of British policy. For us, as for you, there is no possibility of complete Socialist planning within the limits of the nation-state, and we only discredit the idea of Socialism by pretending that there is. If each of us squats inside his kennel of national sovereignty, we shall all die of mange, Marshall biscuit or no Marshall biscuit.

But you feel that your crisis is far more acute than ours, because of the strength of the Communists. The Communists derive their dynamic partly from the knowledge that a great Power stands behind them. So, too, the Gaullists imagine, as Mr. Churchill imagines, that they can rely on America. Only the Socialists have no big friend in the background. In your letter you seemed to blame Britain for not taking on the role. "Why does not Bevin back Blum as Stalin backs Thorez and John Foster Dulles de Gaulle?"

I must tell you frankly that, in our view, this is a fatal attitude for any Socialist to adopt. The surest way of killing the Third Force is to make it look like an alliance run by Britain to bolster up her position as a World Power. We do not want a revived Second International (headquarters London) to fight the Cominform. The Third Force, if it is to revive Western Europe, must be a genuine pooling of resources by equal partners.

Moreover, to demand this of Socialist Britain is to demand the impossible. Fortunately for Europe, we are in no position to organise a British bloc in order to balance the American and Russian blocs. True, in the last four months, our coal and steel and transport workers have done a magnificent job, and averted the catastrophe which seemed imminent last summer. Our industrial recovery and the Cripps Plan for the use of it in the export drive have now progressed to the point where we can negotiate a big barter deal with the U.S.S.R. and guarantee deliveries of machinery. But our economic position is still appallingly precarious—in certain ways more precarious than yours. Two good harvests would solve most of your economic problems, but they would still leave us dependent on the vagaries of world trade and world politics.

It is, indeed, our economic vulnerability which is slowly undermining our insularity. If, alone on our island or within our Commonwealth, we could once again be strong and prosperous, nothing would budge us out of our insular attitude to Europe. A Labour Government would make no difference there. We should still treat you as foreigners across the Channel if we could afford to do so. But we are beginning to realise that we cannot. You must rely, therefore, not on our present recovery, but on our long-term weakness, to drag us reluctantly towards the idea of a Third Force. Unless you understand that, you understand nothing. There will only be recriminations between French and British Socialists as long as you look across the Channel to Britain as a Power to redress the balance of your internal politics.

The plain fact is that each of us isolated will lose all his independence, but together we can regain some of it. Since the day when Europe was liberated by preponderantly American and Russian armies, independence for all of us has become a relative term, a question of degree. Eastern Europe will never become completely independent of Russia—except through a war—nor Western Europe of America. The strategic security belts are facts none of us can alter, and the more the Americans and the Russians think about war, the more strategy will determine policy and cut down our independence. Our first Socialist aim must be to push strategy into the background, where it belongs, and to induce both the blocs to start thinking in terms of trade and economics. That is what we mean when we say that we want the Marshall Plan without the Truman Doctrine, and that the Third Force must opt out of the ideological war. Its dynamic must be the demand of the Common Man for bread and work, and his curse on the ideologists who say, "You must not eat that loaf of bread: it is made of Communist grain. You must not accept that coal-cutting machine: it is a product of American capitalism."

Here in Britain, thank heavens, this sort of ideological insanity, thanks to the Labour Government, is relatively insignificant. Our politics are not being polarised into an American Right and a Russian Left, as yours are. That is why we are in a strong position to shape the Blum speech into a series of practical proposals for achieving Western Union between the blocs. But if the Labour Cabinet is to do this, it must be reasonably sure of a response from you and your neighbours. Mr. Bevin cannot afford to recall the Paris Conference and then have a flop. How far are you French Socialists prepared to go, and how far can you swing the French Government? What line will the Nenni Socialists take? What about Scandinavian neutrality and Belgian complacency in the enjoyment of a good old-fashioned capitalist boom? These are not unreasonable questions. After all, Britain has most to lose in the short run by the establishment of joint machinery for allocating Marshall aid, planning capital investment, and negotiating trade agreements with the Russians. In the present scramble between the Sixteen Nations, we come off best; and we should face the possibility of still further ration cuts if we accepted a policy of fair shares for all in Western Europe. No Labour Government can ask the British people even to consider accepting such a sacrifice unless there is a likelihood of achieving something really constructive as a result. On this point the attitude of France is decisive. And French collaboration in creating a Third Force depends, as we see it, on whether you French Socialists can regain the parliamentary position which was yours in 1945.

You reply that this is unfair, and that you cannot be expected to win back control of the unions and a decisive role in the Cabinet, at a time when you have nothing to offer the working class. Is the deadlock therefore complete? I do not think so. Our trouble as Socialists is the same as our trouble as nations. Despite the talk of international Socialism, we all have our noses to the national grindstone. The Communists do at least have a common strategy, though it is often forced upon them. We do not. Just because we are democrats, we are parochial.

Surely what we must do is to tackle this parochialism of our parties. The next Communist offensive will be launched before the Marshall Plan has been approved by Congress, and long before it can assist us. We know, therefore, that we cannot fight it merely with American aid. We must rely on ourselves and our belief in ourselves. That means making our international Socialism a reality, instead of a matter of formal fraternal greetings at Party conferences. What we need today is a Socialist plan of action worked out not by Civil Servants, but by us, the Socialist parties, and an agreed Socialist plan for Western Germany. If we can achieve this, we can campaign this winter to strengthen the working-class movements which are already Socialist, and to win back those now under Communist control. Before we call on governments to take the initiative, let us take it as Socialist parties and with the peoples. Then the peoples will demand a Third Force of their governments because they feel themselves to be a Third Force already.

Many comrades will be ready with the reply that it is too late: the battle is lost. But revolutionary changes—and the Third Force is a revolutionary change—come not when the intellectuals foresee the necessity for them, but when the situation demands them. In that sense they always come "too late." In the next twelve months, our existence as nations, and our existence as Socialist movements, will be at stake. One way or another, Western Europe and Germany will be reconstructed. If it is in the wrong way—the way that many Americans think they want—then we are faced with ultimate economic collapse or war. If it is in the right way—the way that the peoples of America and of the Eastern bloc equally need, though few of them see it—then the Third Force will be a reality.

But for this to happen, Socialists must know what they want, and agree with each other. We shall not get it all—one never does. But by setting the pace this winter, we shall create the atmosphere in which a second Paris Conference next spring will not be an assemblage of uninspired experts, but an assembly of the Western European nations, with a will to survive and a common purpose.

R. H. S. CROSSMAN

GOBBLE, GOBBLE

We are not a snobbish community like the pheasants. They go to absurd lengths, boasting about being shot by people of royal blood. Only yesterday I heard an old hen who ought to have been *en casserole* long since recalling that her great-grandparents were bagged by George V.

We turkeys are not snobs. We have our values and we do not mind expressing them. We are conscious of a purpose in life. We like it to be fulfilled with dignity, with, if possible, elegance. We realise that our status in the Celestial Fields of Stubble depends ultimately upon having ourselves presentably dished up and served with festive spirit. We prefer our Great End to be timely. There is nothing so chilling to the spirit as to find oneself first upon the Celestial Stubble, with a day or two to go before the arrival of anybody except birds from Institutions or Italian Restaurants. On the other hand, one can scarcely make the most of one's entry when it is delayed. The real quality then will have passed on across the Stubble, and the company is likely to consist of somewhat scraggy specimens, late arrivals who have hung around in markets, counter-jumpers from snack-bars, birds who have appeared upon menus with several alternatives, even real failures who have not appeared as a main dish.

We turkeys, I repeat, are not snobs. We are just sensitive. Not like pigeons who will do almost anything for profit. Not touchy like geese upon matters of precedence. And never, I need hardly add, *bourgeois* like the chicken.

We are sensitive about premature references, few of them original or in good taste, to our Great End. As soon as we are over adolescent complaints such as black head, and are beginning to feel a little weight and substance, these trivial and flippant comments begin. We are photographed long before our Great End is in sight. Our portraits are indelicately captioned with such phrases as "Somebody's Christmas Dinner."

Rash and irresponsible doubts are raised, very often long before we ourselves begin to feel adequately substantial, about whether we shall "go round," whether indeed our Great End will be Sufficient. We have never sought flattery but we resent innuendoes. What other bird—or, to use more technical language, what other *meal*—causes such anxiety and calculation when reckoned against the size of contemporary ovens?

Fraught from birth, as one is, by a sense of destiny, and brought up to observe the proprieties, the last few days upon the earthly stubble are solemn and not without pleasure. Formerly it was a placid time, much stimulated by anticipation. Nowadays unhappily a new element of doubt and of danger has crept in, from which even the stock birds are not immune. The stock birds, as everyone knows, are dedicated beings. They accept the frustration of missing the Great End out of a sense of public duty. They run the risk always of being sent to the Celestial Stubble at some unseemly time. They are aware of their high calling; that is their compensation.

Those not so called approach their destiny with sensibility and dignity—or were able to until recent events jeopardised the very structure of the Great End. There are those who are chosen for market, decent birds, of course, but lacking pronounced characteristics. The rank and file if you like. They may end in the Ritz but they must take many chances. Some of them undoubtedly reach good families—I had an uncle who was beautifully done in Ealing. A few may reach the nobility—my aunt was eaten by a new political peer, and she did not complain. Possibly the greatest distinction in my family was the great aunt who was consumed by a dear old film-star who entertained a sweet man called N. Coward, some ladies of royal blood and an American couple who had just bought a country in the Balkans which they were modernising.

We are not snobbish though we always feel that destiny honours us just a trifle when we are the subject of raffles. We have not had a raffle in my family for some years, but we have been on familiar terms with birds who have been offered as the first prize in raffles of considerable size. People competed for such birds on a chance of several thousand to one. What honourable terms upon which to gain the Celestial Stubble!

The best of us—and I say it in all modesty—are those chosen through private sources for particular tables. Such, indeed, are imbued with the feeling that they have been born with a mission, and their approach to it makes a stately progress. Such birds are consumed by jolly sanitary inspectors, by hungry dukes, by grocers who have gone up in the world, by miners who have gone down, by haughty noblemen who have saved up for the feast, by proud trade unionists to whom it is a routine feed, by strong silent farmers who are making their pile behind the cowshed, by lean townsfolk of small appetite but splendid conversation. With sighs of satisfaction and delight, amid the uproarious greed of children, garnished with jocund banter, such birds accomplish the Great End. Such at least is the pattern of things as we turkeys see it.

Alas, it is no longer a straightforward matter of ethics. There are sinister elements which threaten our values. Whereas it was recognised—but, of course, always unspoken—that certain birds went to market, that others, by sheer quality and merit, attained more special goals, that a sad residue were less timely in their Great End, I fear I must record a new trend which attacks the whole ethical pattern. My half-sister, pensively returning from her earthly stubble, was rustled two evenings ago by somebody with a streamlined motor car and very pointed shoes.

Rustled! To meet the Great End furtively and to find yourself upon the table of someone who *explains* you as the result of knowing a man who knows a man who knows a man! The indignity of being diverted from pre-destined purposes! The effrontery of people who force the Great End upon you in the middle of the night and carry you about in sacks! How can birds enter upon the Celestial Stubble with dignity after being party to a racket, after being eaten—not to put too fine a point on it—under very false pretences.

It may be unusual for a turkey to be so explicit. I wish to make my point only that we turkeys must be conscious of our need to step out—unlike ducks, who are so flat-footed in their approach to moral problems. We like to keep our destinies clearly before us. We accept what is ordained. We must, however, beware of accidents involving men with narrow shoes and wide shoulders.

My own destiny is not particularly exalted. I am not cut out to be a sensation like my brother-in-law, who is booked for a greengrocer with a queue as long as my neck. Or my cousin, who is going to a sporting character who had such success with the second-hand motor cars he repainted in the old basic ration days. I am to go to a certain Mr. Pudney. It is not, perhaps, a destination I would have chosen, but, as I have said before, we turkeys are not snobs.

After my eldest brother was rustled, I believe he spent weeks on the black market. One can just imagine the state he was in when he entered the Fields of Celestial Stubble. If I reach this Mr. Pudney, I am told that he will despatch me with his usual verve and gusto. It is, I fear, a big *IF*.

At present I am protected by a substantial tangle of barbed wire, by three dogs who are bad-mannered but comfortingly aggressive, and by two men who sit up all night with 12-bore guns.

Many of us doubt whether such defences are really adequate. It seems just a little scandalous that birds of our quality should not have the benefit of air cover. We are, however, putting a bold face on it, as we fear that any display of nerves on our part might cause us to lose weight. I shall feel happier myself when this Mr. Pudney materialises. My sister, who is going to a nice substantial stockbroker who lives close to a golf course, says that these writers are often very *nebulous* people.

JOHN PUDNEY

The Arts and Entertainment

VAN GOGH AT THE TATE

As late as 1900, ten years after his death, it must still have been difficult to be certain of the distinction between Van Gogh's pictorial crudeness, his conspicuous inability to imitate current techniques (an ability normally part of the equipment of promising but less frantic painters), and his truly brilliant gift of plastic notation which, when it co-operated with his intense poetic imagination, assisted the production of such astonishing things as the postman's portrait, the portrait of the yellow chair, *La Berceuse* and numerous landscapes, portraits and still-life paintings of the years 1885-90. As for his gift of colour, it can never have been in doubt: even the muddy blacks and browns of the *Potatoe Eaters* glow in that essential manner displayed by very early Cézannes as well as many murky Rouaults. To any painter, this luminous quality in the sum of dirty ingredients—blacks, browns, greys—means mastery. All the early crude fumblings after Millet or, a little later, the Impressionists, do not matter, however unconcealed they may be, because there is somehow present in the resulting mess a unique sort of imaginative conviction. This, we feel, was a man who could not help unconscious success every time he picked up a brush.

The critic is concerned precisely with perceiving success in, and attributing value to aspects of an artist's work that have remained in a sense unconscious. But there are always some who will "perceive" what is demonstrably non-existent, as there are some who will appreciate most clearly that which is not most significant. The Germans have tended to see the bristlings and twirlings of an expressionist in Van Gogh, without being equally aware of the miraculous harmonies of colour and design by which this painter succeeded—with lapses only in the final year of his life—in keeping his own fiercer elements, pictorially speaking, jolly well in their pictorial place! Of course we now know that literally anything, no matter how savagely emotive, can be stated with pictorial legitimacy once its "pictorial place" has been found or created; once it has been given a formal equivalent: this is the main phenomenon in Picasso's art. But Van Gogh was a forerunner of this even stranger genius in a number of ways, though by comparison his intensity has a narrower range, a more innocent, less intellectual nature. Where Van Gogh threw the whole of himself overboard, leaving no half-self behind to watch over the proceedings, preserving no shred of self-consciousness, but concentrating everything into a single consciousness of his subject, whatever it was—Picasso is self-consciousness multiplied. Picasso paints, as it were, at a remove in consciousness: the "subject" of his painting is frequently the *process* of painting. As soon as Picasso sees and decides to paint a coffee-pot he is aware of his reaction to it even more forcibly than he is of the pot itself. The reaction to the coffee-pot is thus the real subject of a Picasso painting of a coffee-pot; and hence the sufficiency, not to say potency, of this article!

One of the most interesting things about this exhibition at the Tate is the revelation (to my generation) of Van Gogh's mildness; of the gay truth, even the benevolence, of the vision of men, women, landscape and general furniture which underlies the brilliant surface fireworks, sometimes more obscured than enhanced by them; but always powerfully presented none the less. Inevitably we see Van Gogh at the other side of Matisse and Picasso, with the result that much of the daring has evaporated for us. After Matisse his colour is less extraordinary, either for the intensity of the mixtures he slapped on or for the perception and originality of what may be called his colour invention. This is the ability to invest objects with certain colours—even to identify each thing with a given colour—that observation alone would never attribute, and to do this so that the general concourse of bright forms creates the conviction of an authentic sensation. Van Gogh, making a tree-trunk blue, a

whitewashed wall lime green, a field orange, the sky a "night blue" and the tree's leaves black-purple, gets over to us a total sensation of normality, a July afternoon in essence undistorted. Also, specific colours are found to have a specific poetic, even symbolic, evocativeness—though just *what* may well remain unspecifiable! But who, for 20 years now, can see ochres mix with lemon and chrome yellow without a rush-bottomed chair or a sunflower head flickering in the mind? These are images of a definite spiritual vitality; and they have a universal validity. Perhaps their author may be regarded more as a genius who painted than as a painter of genius: few great painters have had as little technical preoccupation as Van Gogh (not in the sense of struggle with the means of their art but in that of conscious power to manipulate them); few have said so much with so little. Of course Van Gogh *was* a supreme painter, but his paint followed his vision and desire at considerably more than a trot. Indeed, the headlong pursuit of his eye by his hand is the factor mainly responsible for his "style": the dots and dashes and broken twirls were strictly a by-product: hence their inimitable nature. Hence, too, Van Gogh's remoteness from the processes of the painterly French: a Bonnard or Braque actually arrives at his vision, one feels, by way of the pictorial means he commands, means cultivated with great patience and intelligence.

PATRICK HERON

FILMS IN 1947

THIS has been, I am told, the *annus mirabilis* for champagne. Whether the same is true of the cinema one cannot possibly tell. The celluloid-tasting, the vintaging of films, that goes on everywhere at this season is highly unreal. It judges not of films made, but of films shown here during a twelve-month; and the best of these date back often two, three, or seven years. Thus the latest English and American trends compete, or fail to compete, with older achievements from Europe that happen only now to have come our way. What has been going on during the same period in Paris, Rome, Moscow, Berlin? Wait and see! All we can be certain of is that a great deal more of consequence has been going on there than in the studios of the English-speaking world.

However, one's enjoyments draw a picture, and 1947 has been for me memorable as the year in which good French films have been more numerous than ever and in which a trio of films from Italy have knocked us sideways. All our sympathies for a deluded and amiable people must go out to the superb, renascent qualities of *Open City*, *To Live in Peace*, and *Shoe-Shine*. These films live; most only move about. Here are ordinary people, lit by tragedy or comedy, or more often a mixture of the two. Their humanity catches at the heart: the priest and the wife in *Open City*, the children in *Shoe-Shine*, almost everyone in *To Live in Peace*—we can't help accepting and loving them. If there is such a thing as corporate genius, these films have it, and on analysis it is quite impossible to say which has contributed most—the time and the situation, the script-writer, the director, the actors. All seem carelessly, but with rapt attention, to have combined. The formal defects, which are obvious enough, count for nothing—almost nothing at all—beside the instinct and imagination here at play. Almost as an afterthought one might suggest that Aldo Fabrizi, the leading figure in two of these films, is a great actor, and Luigi Zampa (*To Live in Peace*) perhaps a great director.

What I mean by the genius of time and place can be illustrated by contrast in another group of films seen also during the year: those from Czechoslovakia. That country had, to the outside eye, a similar spur of suffering and of reclaimed feeling, but its films, though respect-worthy, proved quite unmemorable. Either the Czechs lack the Italian genius, the instinctive rush and control of feeling, or under the influence of Russia they have yet to experience their true release.

The other "films of the year" provide no masterpiece but (as I look back) a remarkably high level of accomplishment. Here is a list of those I have either seen again or shall take the first opportunity to revisit. (Order of appearance.)

Symphonie Pastorale. Delannoy. Story by André Gide. French.
Odd Man Out. Carol Reed. English.
Panique. Duvivier. French.
Open City. Roberto Rosselini. Italian.
Sarajevo. Max Ophuls. French.
Les Portes de la Nuit. Carné. French.
Partie de Campagne. Renoir. French.
To Live in Peace. Luigi Zampa. Italian.
La Belle et la Bête. Cocteau. French.
Monsier Verdoux. Chaplin. American.
Tobacco Road. Ford. American.
Shoe-Shine. Vittorio de Sica. Italian.

The next half-dozen or so would nearly all be French: *La Fille du Puisatier*, *M. La Souris*, *Monsieur Alibi*, etc. All of these films I reviewed at length when they were shown, and I have no space to recall them in detail. Our gratitude to French film-makers, who supply the intelligent film-goer now with more than half of his yearly enjoyment, must be tempered by an irritation that we should have to wait so many seasons and years before any film can make the dangerous Channel crossing. The films, apart from those mentioned, I have most *wanted* to see are the still invisible *L'Age d'Or* by René Clair and Clouzot's *Le Corbeau*.

The best documentary in a poor year was Clément's *Bataille du Rail*, a moving re-enactment of the railwaymen's resistance, but not quite of the first rank.

English films have stood still. But if there has been a lamentable lack of push at the front—only *Odd Man Out* can claim to have made any sort of advance in quality—there has been at least some commendable catching-up in the middle and rear. With the axing of Hollywood, there should be little difficulty in supplying the gaps of entertainment with such enjoyable pieces as *Hue and Cry*, *Mine Own Executioner*, *It Always Rains on Sunday*, etc. And inconspicuously we go on producing documentaries with the solid qualities of *The Bridge* and Rotha's *The World is Rich* (the latter not yet generally shown).

But is that quite good enough? Where has the promise of the war years leaked away? Will Mr. Rank's retrenchments mean less cash and more quality or—as I suspect—a timid lowering of standards? How is it that the B.B.C. can provide weekly in *Itma* humour of a brilliant order while no English studio is capable of producing an even moderately funny film? Heaven knows, there is the opportunity and the need for laughter to-day. Or a film with imaginative daring, or social consequence? The outlook seems to me unsettled without being hopeless. We are still some little way from sliding into the position in Hollywood; where, as everyone knows, the one really un-American activity is to produce a first-rate film.

WILLIAM WHITEBAIT

RADIO NOTES

I HAVE not been able to sit out either of the programmes in Mr. P. H. Burton's new series called *British Courage*. This is far from being a reflection on the heroic subjects of them; but, to me, at any rate, neither programme seemed sufficiently gripping in treatment to engage attention or curiosity in its early stages. The first in particular, with its slappings and beatings, was far too much like an everyday spy film to be bearable. But Mr. Burton's other series, *Meet the People*, is a very different matter. Simple, unadorned and full of urgent material, these features compel the closest attention. Everything about them is as neat and clean and pointful as a bright new pin; and they so successfully preserve illusion that after them one puzzles over the way they have possibly been devised and produced. About *British Courage* there is no puzzle; one can all but see the bored, efficient actors tiptoeing up to and away from the mike, and wishing that they didn't have to do all this on a Sunday. In *Meet the People* there are no professional actors; somehow or other the characters have had to be tracked down and persuaded to help Mr. Burton to get the script ready; intelligent and talkative people have had to provide the stuff, and eloquent and lively people (the same people, one hopes) have had to deliver it at the mike. Last week, a Welsh miner, Mr. Emrys Griffiths and his family were beyond praise; needless to say, since they are or have been miners, they had much that was painful and outrageous to tell us; but they showed no sign that hardships had knocked the humanity and fun out of them. I especially relished Mrs. Williams' remorseless cracks about her husband's fondness for prize-fights. This programme must bring most listeners as near to a miner as they will ever get in their lives. I hope it will be repeated.

And I could well listen again to Mr. Dennis Johnston's talk, "The Red Horse of Hollywood," boldly and unsparingly satirical about both America and us. Mr. Johnston has that brilliant gift of being able to pile up a preposterously long sentence which grows funnier and funnier as it goes on. I have a feeling that English is particularly apt for this purpose, and that Irish writers and speakers alone have developed enough confident loquacity thus to employ it. It is the same gift which keeps alive and perennially amusing the early dramatic criticism of Mr. Shaw. The tremendous roulade with which Mr. Johnston demolished the popular sentence, "For one year we stood alone," echoes still in my ears; I wish I could quote it.

Of *The Cloister*, Verhaeren's play given twice last week by the Third, I find it difficult to speak with moderation, for I have only once in my life, and that was at a performance of Racine's *Britannicus* at the Comédie Française in 1933, known acting so grotesquely over-charged. Most of the cast seemed to vie with each other in discovering which of them could produce the most sustained, intense, and ludicrously maudlin vibrato. This Verhaeren play and the Griboyedov comedy, also given last week, raise several problems, notably that of the Third's choice of translations, which I hope to return to in a few week's time.

HENRY REED

THE THEATRE

"Macbeth," at the Aldwych

One comes away from this most striking production of *Macbeth* with a feeling that it is quite different from other successful contemporary Shakespeare productions. And at first one may be puzzled to make out why. Other productions have been stirring and swift. Mr. Paul Sherriff's costumes are certainly as beautiful, his sets as evocative and suggestive as any I have seen; the lighting most ingenious, imaginative and helpful, the direction intelligent and inventive. But it is not this—admirable as it all is—that makes the difference. Only later when people ask the usual questions—"What was Macbeth like? Who was the Lady Macbeth?"—does one fully realise. It is just that those very questions don't, for a blessed change, arise. This is not one of those bright reshuffles of the dear old West End pack. Here we have a designed production, an attempt to give a considered and rounded version of a play, instead of a series of virtuoso performances of parts.

This company might well be anonymous. They play as a group, subordinated to the overriding pressure of an idea which they all appear to share, an idea of the play as a whole. And this sustains the production on an extraordinarily high level in defiance of the individual elements. For, of course, there are losses as well as gains in this method. Those missing feature players are, after all, highly skilled craftsmen, and here there are individual performances that are distinctly weak. Naturally; for this kind of production is usually undertaken by established companies whose actors are specially trained for it. Yet the weaknesses are not glaring. A consistency of underlying pattern props up even the weakest and gives to the whole a unity unlike anything we have seen in London for some years.

A bit Moscow Arts? Certainly, and what a welcome infusion. And how exciting the result. The skies lower or flare out blood red, the great bell booms in the murky hall, the cavern smokes and the cauldron bubbles and from it the apparitions ghoulishly rise. Yet with what admirable art the resources of stagecraft are subordinated to the needs of the story, to the plain, straight telling of the plain straight dreadful tale. For this, of course, we have to thank not only the producer but also Mr. Michael Redgrave. He is perfectly capable of giving a virtuoso performance which we might then argue over and compare with that of the other disputants for our local Oscars. He chooses not to. He chooses to plot his curve beautifully within the proportions of the whole. Many stars, I should guess from the results, start out

from their own conception of the name part (or, worse some idiosyncratic version of it) and built a production round that. Mr. Redgrave, I should guess, has started from a conception of the play and his own performance is rooted solidly in it. Not that there is anything fussy or would-be original about this conception. It is just the plain play, with the protagonists picked out by their crime, but not standing out; not neurotic exceptions to a well-ordered world, but protagonists of violence in a world of violence driven by their hideous logic to the last extremes.

Lady Macbeth's always appears to me an unenviable part; there is not for her, as there is for him, even the slightest lead-up. She must from her very first appearance strike the note of the sinister and hold it while her senses last. Miss Ena Burrill seemed to me to do just this; more, she had moments of really freezing us (the rolling up of her velvet sleeve as she takes from Macbeth the blood-infested weapons was one such). Mr. Redgrave within the limits that he sets himself—and they are proper limits—gives a performance that commands our acceptance, fine and finished, with the gradations exactly marked and movingly rendered. There were a few lapses in the direction, mostly slight (though the murder of Banquo was rather sadly botched) but there were many most memorable scenes. The company as a whole, the electricians, the producer (Mr. Norris Houghton) deserve our thanks for a most exciting evening and for making it, one hopes, a little harder for us to be fobbed off with a fourth best next time.

T. C. WORSLEY

At Sadler's Wells

The chief surprise of the *Fledermaus* revival is the Adèle of Marjorie Shires, a young singer with a natural feeling for comedy and a sweet, unforced voice. Hedley Brigg's sets are extremely pretty; as producer, he does his best to overcome the ingrained desire of British opera singers to turn this delicate Viennese masterpiece into a charade. Valetta Iacopi repeats her excellent Orlofsky; some of the other principals need attention from a Director of the Spoken Word. Altogether a decorative and high-spirited revival, which deserves its success. On Boxing Day *Hänsel and Gretel* makes its annual reappearance, and parents who neglect their obvious duty deserve a shocking fate, for every musical child ought to grow up with Humperdinck's score as a part of its mental furniture. A third Sadler's Wells revival which deserves support is the delightful *Quattro Rusteghi* of Wolf-Ferrari (January 9): this was one of the company's happiest efforts last year, and it will be disheartening if the public again refuse to give it a fair trial.

D. S. T.

Correspondence

THE CUCKOO CRY

SIR,—Professor Laski's cry for justice rather than charity would have been more effective had he written in ink and not venom. My blood has often boiled at the patronising manners of rich people doling out charity; my sensibilities have been sickened by the snobbishness and clamour for publicity faintly disguised in the name of charity by those whose expenditure in raising some paltry sum for a hospital was out of all proportion to the gift; I have known officials who have to be deferential to the richer patrons of their charity and employ unworthy methods to stir them to keep on giving or to give more.

I have also seen justice at the hands of Public Assistance Committees and Local Authorities which was just as sickening.

But all these things are the corruption of something good. There are very many who help their less fortunate brethren by constant acts of self-denial; their gifts are administered in the most effective and generous spirit; the recipients are made to feel it is a pleasure to give them something for Christ's sake. Both donors and officials try to and succeed in following the lead of such social reformers as Barnardo, Fry and Shaftesbury to mention only three. The motive dominating each of these leaders was the same—"the love of Christ constraineth me"; that is, devotion to the person of Christ expressed in love of our brethren. Only when justice is tempered with that spirit will it bring similar benefits. Without that spirit, though masquerading in its name, are all the horrors condemned by Professor Laski.

J. M. CARTWRIGHT

BUTTONLESS GERMANY

SIR,—Mr. Erich Kästner's parable of the buttons requires some comment. It illustrates clearly the muddled thinking of which many progressive Germans are guilty just now.

Germany's unprecedented acts of aggression and cruelty from which so many nations are still suffering to-day is polished off in one or two introductory sentences; after that Germany figures as a miserably beaten wretch. Now, we all hope that Germany's victims will be able to forgive and forget, but it is not for Germans to do so.

Furthermore, reparations are not a wilful and useless act of vengeance. They could play (and are playing) an invaluable part in the restoration of the economies of Germany's victims. But even that is not their most important purpose. The aim of the Potsdam dismantling programme is not to make Germany hold up her trousers for ever more, but to ensure that the industrial potential of her neighbours is raised in relation to her own so that a repetition of the Hitler episode can be prevented right from the start in the absence of other and in themselves more desirable guarantees.

Reparations mean hardships but to see in them the cause of the present deplorable and chaotic state of Germany is quite fantastic. German progressives would be well advised to ponder the real causes of their present plight which go much deeper and could well bear more consideration. I would only mention three, each of which in itself represents a far greater source of hardship than any claim to reparations that may be advanced.

(1) Germany's long drawn-out war of aggression.

(2) The failure to carry out a thorough-going land reform in the Western Zones and the continued toleration there of Nazis in administrative positions.

(3) The splitting up of Germany into two main blocs with the consequent impossibility of carrying out a national and unified economic policy.

Let Mr. Erich Kästner write a parable on this theme and he will render a service to his country. The "Button" parable is irrelevant and dangerous.

Manchester. ERNEST WANGORMANN

THE GREAT DEBATE

SIR,—Mr. Crossman, in his last letter, writes: "To 'go all out' in co-ordinating our planning with that of Russia would also completely destroy our political independence."

What is this independence, this right to sit on the fence? Surely Socialists believe in planned international trade, with guaranteed markets on both sides as far as possible. It has recently been found possible to negotiate agreements for planned exchanges with the U.S.S.R. and Jugoslavia. Such firm arrangements could not be made with a "free enterprise" country; indeed, the negotiations almost broke down because this country is barely Socialist enough to control its own internal economic position.

Everything is to be gained by "co-ordinating our planning" thoroughly with any country with a planned economy, and this (as Stalin told Mr. Parkin) should not prevent us from trading with other, planless, parts of the world, nor need it dominate our internal plan.

It is senseless to try to create joint economic planning staffs with other Western European countries unless they are at least as planned as this country, and it is not reasonable to consider trade with a planned country, whatever its party politics, on a basis at all comparable with trade with America. By not planning the economy of Socialist Europe *with* the economy of Communist Europe, just because we don't agree with everything that happens there, we should be losing our best hope of economic recovery and stability, without which political independence is worthless.

ARTHUR FRENCH

SIR,—The issue in debate between myself, on the one hand, and Messrs. Crossman and Woolf on the other is how Labour Britain can bring about a slackening of the tension between the great Powers and draw them together. The "Western Bloc" is irrelevant to this issue because it has already become an instru-

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ment of American policy, is strategically indefensible, socially unstable, and politically and economically dependent on the U.S.A.

I say we can do that job by entangling ourselves equally with both East and West. In practice this means, as things are, partially disentagling ourselves from our present humiliating and dangerous degree of dependence on the U.S.A., and partially entangling ourselves with Eastern Europe and the U.S.S.R. through trade treaties (which, to be implemented, require the co-ordination of our national planning with theirs), political compromises in Europe based on our common belief in the necessity for Socialism as the basis of reconstruction and the prerequisite for the revival of democracy and political freedom, and by inviting the U.S.S.R. into full partnership through the United Nations in settling Greek, Middle Eastern, Chinese, Indo-Chinese and Indonesian affairs. A Western group as part of an all-European agreement with France and the U.S.S.R. within Uno fits into this policy at a later stage.

The operative word is "partially." In this interdependent world we must pursue our own aims and secure attention for our needs and interests through co-operation with both sides rather than by striving to make ourselves wholly independent of either. But we must also have elbow room!

This means taking an active part in the power-political and ideological conflicts. We must use our position to frustrate the power-political conflict by basing our defence preparations and our publicly declared policy on the resolve in no circumstances to fight on the side of the U.S.A. against the U.S.S.R., or vice versa, and to conduct our dealings with both on the basis of the Charter. We must also put forward positive proposals and work for constructive Anglo-American-Soviet compromises based on those proposals on outstanding issues concerning the control of atomic energy, regulation of the use of the veto power, Greece, the Far and Middle East, etc. That means, if necessary, bringing these matters before the Security Council and not hesitating to use the threat of our own veto power to back our demand for compromises that will take reasonable account of our views. But we must have our *own* policy, not go echoing American policy.

As to the ideological conflict, here too we must wade in on our own side, which is the side of democratic Socialism, and no more hesitate to wrestle with the Americans over their attempt to link the restoration of capitalism with the revival of democracy, than with the U.S.S.R. over its conceptions of political democracy in relation to, e.g., the future of Germany.

But, of course, to embark on such a policy we cannot start by all-in hostility to the Communist Parties and Socialist-Communist alliances in Europe. That is precisely what Messrs. Crossman and Woolf do. They are logically impelled, therefore, to deny the possibility of coming to terms with the U.S.S.R. (although Mr. Woolf says we nevertheless ought to try).

From this it is a short step to Mr. Crossman's loudly expressed belief that any attempt to act on Labour's election pledges in foreign policy means "integrating" this country with the Russian Bloc, uniting Europe "on Russian terms," ending our national independence and starting the third world war. What nonsense! Mr. Crossman appears resigned to his Western Bloc becoming an American bridgehead—and, by the same token, no doubt, a bridge between himself and Mr. Bevin.

As for Mr. Woolf, my proposals induce in him an appalling vision of a blood-boltered Bolshevik Zilly breaking into his house, snaking him out from under the bed and slitting his throat, unless in the meantime he has been atom-bombed, or removed to a concentration camp in the short interval which remains to him in a world four-fifths of whose inhabitants are "Communist or capitalist lunatics." His inspiring conclusion is that we must have a Western Bloc in order to contract out of this dreadful world so far as possible, although he admits that he has little hope that "it or any sane policy will be adopted—or would succeed, if adopted."

I think that when I said in my previous letter that these gentlemen based their international politics on an anti-Communist and anti-Soviet phobia, only slightly less strong than that animating Mr. Churchill, I was guilty of meiosis. K. ZILLIACUS

Mr. Crossman replies: "I note that Mr. Zilliacus now states that we should 'entangle ourselves *equally* with the East and West.' In that case—if he were logical—he should see no objection to a Western Union which accepts American aid and also trades with the Eastern Bloc, along the lines I suggested in 'The Great Debate.' But no! A few paragraphs later this policy is condenmed as 'becoming an American bridgehead.'

"Mr. Zilliacus is quite clever enough to recognise both his own inconsistencies and the absurdity of his accusations. Can it be that the desperate dilemma created for him by Russian policy compels him to confuse the issue at such inordinate length?" [This correspondence must now cease.—ED., *N.S. & N.*]

ARBEITERWOHLFAHRT

SIR,—May I bring to the notice of your readers the formation of the "British Aid for German Workers?" This organisation has been started as a British associate of the old-established German relief organisation "Arbeiterwohlfahrt," which before 1933, and since 1945, has had strong associations with the Trades Union and Social Democratic movements. Relief work in Germany is largely conducted on confessional or other sectional lines and it is an unfortunate fact that with all the help that has been given by people in this country to relieve distress in Germany, all too little has gone to thousands in the Labour movement who have been consistent opponents of the Nazis. Many of them are living to-day in great distress and it is our aim to co-operate with the "Arbeiterwohlfahrt" in helping them.

I am sure that there are many people among your readers who will be glad of the opportunity of providing some relief for the people to whom we look to build up democracy in Germany. We require all the contributions of money that we can get to enable us to buy and send to Germany the badly needed supplies. Contributions should be sent to me, as Treasurer, at the House of Commons.

ASHLEY BRAMALL

RIMBAUD

SIR,—Your reviewer says that the mysterious additional name of Joseph which appears on Rimbaud's application for a reader's ticket at the British Museum must be due to the "piety of his respected mother" and he adds, "it was customary for a young Frenchman to take an additional saint's name at his first communion." I did not know this nor that the French, a hundred years ago, made their first communion at so late an age. Being myself a Catholic I did know that Catholics of all nationalities—girls as well as boys—take an additional name at confirmation and I did consider this possibility as an explanation, but finally rejected it. I do not think it likely that Rimbaud in 1874, when he was so far detached from all orthodox religious practices, would set much store by his confirmation name nor dream of using it on that account. It has, in any case, no legal validity and is very rarely used—he did not think of using it the previous year when making a first application for a ticket.

I still believe that there must be some mysterious—and to him highly significant—reason for the addition at this time—he rarely did things gratuitously—for the hyphening of it to the name by which he was commonly known—not the first of his names—and not merely tacking it on after his legal baptismal names—which would have been the normal course had it been used at all. The matter is, of course, of no great consequence—it is only amusing as a subject of speculation—it is not capable of solution and one person's guess is as good as another's.

ENID STARKIE

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BOOKS IN GENERAL

THE faults of the educated English are numberless and in these times education cannot pass without remark. In literature the Americans, for example (unless they are of the beglamoured kind) look upon our habit of writing essays as a pathetic affliction, an incurable tic, a sort of St. Vitus's dance of the intellect, an hereditary disease of the national egoism. One more instance of the English idleness of mind, one more aspect of English vagary and playfulness, one more English refusal to admit a target, let alone a target figure, affronts their responsible Roman eyes. What does it all add up to, they ask; what is it but the cooing of cultivated voices in a club or the murmur of innumerable bees in the bonnets of immemorial dons? Of course, we are good essay writers: they admit that. No one surpasses us in this kind of fatality; but who in his senses wants to make anything of it? Only the English, who find such notorious difficulty in being themselves, that they are driven back upon an artifice.

To us the answer must be that good writers are forced up by the labouring shoulders of the bad: it is by the large output of bad essays that our writers are trained to produce a few excellent ones. To think of the English essay as a cluster of magpies on the mark of personal whimsy, a fanciful determination to lose every battle, including the last, is a delusion of the enemy. Let us pick up a new posthumous volume* of papers selected from the work of Virginia Woolf and see if there is method and direction in them. Mrs. Woolf left a large amount of material, finished and unfinished, at the time of her death, and this new book, *The Moment*, which Mr. Leonard Woolf has edited, contains some work already published in periodicals but not put into a book before. As in an earlier volume, *The Death of the Moth*, this is not a collection of fragments, though some of the pieces have not completely passed through that process of seven or eight re-writings to which Virginia Woolf commonly submitted her work.

If *The Moment* is the English essay, we must say how orderly, how exact, how precisely directed it is. It stands like a well-run house, but not a house that exists merely to be well run. Its rooms are accustomed. Here we may dine with Mrs. Thrale; in the drawing-room Scott entertains his guests. Congreve sits alone. Why does he not write? Here in the study we close out the world, but in they come, the cold and angering draughts of the 'thirties, when the educated fumed with passionate insincerity against their education. Upstairs is the ludicrous room, which every house has, the room where the neighbours knock on the wall, whether in madness, unaware that we live on the other side, or pursuing the uncouth mystery of their domestic life; and here, across the landing, is the room with its ceiling like a winding sheet, where we make that sudden and terrifying discovery of the sky when we are ill. For the mind, at any rate, the house is complete; but what is it but a blunt rock in the sea of time, the time outside that slops and drags, that opens into caverns and as fast closes them with its shale-like falls? Venture out into that sea of minutes, step into the garden, sit there in the evening, and between the desultory talk, we shall feel the rise and the sudden empty drop of that rocking element in which we are islanded, and watch it splinter into its moments like glass:

> Then comes the terror, the exultation; the power to rush out unnoticed, alone; to be consumed; to be swept away to become a rider on the random wind; the tossing wind; the trampling and neighing wind; the horse with the blown-back mane; the tumbling; the foraging; he who gallops forever . . . travelling, indifferent; to be part of the eyeless dark, to be rippling and streaming, to feel the glory run molten up the spine, down the limbs, making the eyes glow, burning, bright and penetrate the buffeting waves of the wind.

A more cruelly ecstatic passage could be found in *The Waves*, no doubt; but does not that one define the alternating security and terror, the dramatic skid of sense and imagination, the nervous acquaintance of the sociable and the solitary which we always find in the work of Virginia Woolf. The essays of George Eliot are the yawns of genius, the very wordy yawns. The essays of Virginia Woolf are the sharpening of its pencils.

I am one of those who prefer her in this disposition. To her, it is evident, literature was more solid than life, and I prefer the solid. Doubtless life is fluid, doubtless the moments break on the pane and, after their cold, shrill pause, trickle downwards and run together. Mrs. Dalloway's umbrella, may be (for its moment), as big an actor as Mrs. Dalloway herself. The mind is a kaleidoscope. Life has neither beginning nor end, but is a succession of shakes. In Virginia Woolf agnosticism had become poetry. But life, the people, the events we see, was too fluid a subject for so fluid a treatment. Where Virginia Woolf excelled—and *Orlando* is the example—is with the past, with the settled. The only stable people are the dead. Literature was her country. There they stand, enmarbled and cemented in the grotesque Père-Lachaise of their immortality: Scott the unreadable, Spenser the impenetrable, Congreve the unrevealing, Gosse, in his cat-like glasses "prim as a housemaid, as suspicious as a governess," Mrs. Thrale one whom God joined but whom biography has put asunder. Virginia Woolf opens the cemetery gates and out they trot to re-enact their moments. There has been in our day, it is true, a vogue of biographical criticism in which a foible, like Scott's passion for gas-lighting, might outweigh the pressure of the time in which a subject lived or a philosophy in which he believed; but Virginia Woolf did more than catch a foible. She re-entangled mind and nature. She is writing of Edmund Gosse: it is altogether one of her best essays in criticism:

> The peculiarity which Mr. Charteris notes in his walk "curiously suggestive at once of eagerness and caution"—runs through his life and limits his intelligence. He hints, he qualifies, he insinuates, he suggests, but he never speaks out, for all the world as if some austere Plymouth Brother were lying in wait to make him do penance for his audacity . . . Fear always seems to dog his footsteps. He dips his fingers with astonishing agility and speed into character, but if he finds something hot or gets hold of something large, he drops it and withdraws with the agility of a scalded cat.

Living but unfair? Is that sense of movement no more than the ripple of an ironical mind? Watch the completion of the portrait (for it is Virginia Woolf's virtue that she paints the portrait before our eyes) and we see the mass of the figure disposed in its proper perspective. "In the 19th century literature had become, for one reason or another, a profession rather than a vocation." The cautious Gosse perfectly fitted the professional scheme.

> Literature to him was an adorable mistress and it was his delight "to dress her charms and make her more beloved." Lovers, of course, sometimes go further and a child is the result . . . Like all critics who persist in judging without creating he forgets the risk and agony of childbirth. His criticism becomes more and more a criticism of the finished article, and not of the article in the making. The smoothness, the craftmanship of the work rouse his appreciation, and he directs our attention only to its more superficial aspects. In other words, he is a critic for those who read rather than for those who write.

Was Virginia Woolf a critic for those who write? In one sense, yes: her criticism is eventful and populated. It is the criticism of a travelling mind, moving forward and stopping to look back upon her road, to retrace it, even, in a different mood, bent (since literature itself gave her solid ground under her feet) upon change. Her criticism is indeed more robustly peopled than her novels and shows a rash taste for life. But in the sense of telling us, as some critics are able to do, what we shall write, how we shall write, for what purposes, Virginia Woolf is not a critic for those who write. And yet—is that so? Since she *makes* before our eyes, hesitates with her thought and almost asks us what way we shall have it (this or that?) she puts the process of writing, the very science of the imagination before us; and in this way she does at least put us in the attitude of writing. I do not know how she strikes the sociological; perhaps she makes them wish they knew less and could write better. But what she unquestionably does is to convey, whether for reader or for writer, a strict conviction of purpose. That purpose is to waken us to the continuity of the educated tradition; to explore its austerities as well as its humours and aberrations; to place it clearly (not with an unction like George Eliot's nor with any kind of uplift) within the responsibility of her readers. That was the enormous flattery.

I have left to the end the one example of the pure essay, the English mania, in *The Moment*. It is the essay on illness. In her literary essays, as in the novels of Jane Austen, judgment sits in every sentence—the words are wigged not winged, the parties give themselves away, get or lose their costs, in the ever succulent case-made law of empirical criticism. But in *On Being Ill* we have something as strange, as bold, as original as her fictions, a prose where lights are switched on suddenly and, behold! We are in another room. The solitary, panicky and poetic self is joined to the will, the sense of common experience, the curiosity unallayed and stoical of the prose writer:

> But no: with a few exceptions—De Quincey attempted something of the sort in *The Opium Eater;* there must be a volume or two about disease scattered through the pages of Proust—literature does its best to maintain that its concern is with the mind; that the body is a sheet of plain glass through which the soul looks straight and clear, and, save for one or two passions such as desire and greed, is null, and negligible and non-existent. On the contrary, the very opposite is true. All day, all night the body intervenes; blunts or sharpens, colours or discolours, turns to wax in the warmth of June, hardens to tallow in the murk of February. The creature within can only gaze through the pane—smudged or rosy; it cannot separate off from the body like the sheath of a knife or the pod of a pea for a single instant; it must go through the whole unending procession of changes, heat and cold, comfort and discomfort, hunger and satisfaction, health and illness, until there comes the inevitable catastrophe; the body smashes itself to smithereens, and the soul (it is said) escapes. But of all this the daily drama of the body there is no record. People write always of the doings of the mind; the thoughts that come to it; its noble plans; how the mind has civilised the universe. They show it ignoring the body in the philosopher's turret or kicking the body, like an old leather football across leagues of snow and desert in the pursuit of conquest or discovery. Those great wars which the body wages with the mind a slave to it, in the solitude of the bedroom against the assault of fever or the oncome of melancholia, are neglected. Nor is the reason far to seek. To look these things squarely in the face would need the courage of a lion tamer; a robust philosophy, a reason rooted in the bowels of the earth.

The art of Virginia Woolf, it used to be said, is feminine. If this means argument is not hammered in, that ideas are not built up into structures on their own, that anger is missing, it is so. The only markedly feminine things are the sharp rap on the knuckles she deals out without warning, the occasional sound of "Goodness gracious" in her voice, the brisk way in which she polishes off a bishop or a Mr. Jones. One would be delighted to differ from her; but dread to have a difference. But if the word feminine is meant to convey the fanciful, the wilful, the dithering and labyrinthine, then one must be struck by the very opposite qualities in her work: its austere directness in the pursuit of its desired themes; its volatile imagination; under the guise of tentativeness, its settled opinion. But this is merely to say that her feminity was of our time, nearer to that of some figures of the 18th century than to the following one which so lavishly misinformed us on the subject of her sex.

V. S. PRITCHETT

* *The Moment and Other Essays* By VIRGINIA WOOLF. *Hogarth Press.* 10s. 6d.

THE BUBBLE REPUTATION

The Journals of André Gide. Vol. I, 1889-1913. Translated by JUSTIN O'BRIEN. *Secker & Warburg.* 25s.

In 1933, Montgomery Belgion was already alarmed by the view that Gide had begun to date. To-day, the ex-Communist Gide is attacked by the French Communist press, and we may gather from Sartre's editorials in *Les Temps Modernes* that Gide is already a classic and loved by the critics because he has written posthumous works during his life-time (this is said of Valéry and only implied of Gide) and that the value of his work is identical with that of his typical reader, the cultivated son of a well-to-do middle-class family in safe revolt against that family's narrow, utilitarian Theism. When the award of a Nobel prize coincides with a comprehensive English translation of his *Journals* (the rest is to follow in two more large and beautiful, American-printed volumes), the over-all question is bound to arise. Is Gide really as good as they say?

A barren question, if asked disinterestedly. I see the need for Sartre to raise it. Sartre is Gide's natural successor, and he wishes to swerve all writing into a different path—rightly, I think. In these *Journals*, Gide is equally uncompromising with the minor prophet whose mantle fell upon himself, Anatole France (with France, too, questions about what it all really amounted to were always quelled by references to the famous "style").

About Gide's huge reputation, there is somethir g unplaceable, diffuse and possibly journalist. It is not as the author of specific masterpieces that he carries weight (and in this he is justly paired off with Paul Valéry). I do not believe that his most devoted admirers would claim a great deal for him as a technical innovator or place his achievement in the recognised "creative" forms (more especially fiction, with *Les Caves du Vatican, L'Immoraliste, Les Faux-monnayeurs, La Porte étroite*) beside the best of his contemporaries, Rilke, Kafka, Yeats, Claudel, Proust, Joyce or Eliot. Indeed, most of his narrative fiction and drama serve the purposes of a day-dream annexe to the enormous autobiographical structure which his work otherwise constitutes. In his novels, plays and idylls, he has sketched out *possible* attitudes for the young man who was always at once himself and his ideal reader and whose life, even without these further delicious possibilities (such as that of ejecting people from moving trains), was never unduly constricted or wholly without a gesture and a pose. For, although it would certainly be false to say that Gide played to the gallery, yet it might be true that he plays in turn to the boxes, the dress circle and the orchestra stalls.

Grant this, and grant that the greatest are less inclined to tease their audience, and how impressive Gide remains. The secret lies in these *Journals*. Sartre should at least applaud the deliberation with which Gide "chose himself." Any attempt to pick out the first and crucial step in this choice must involve mentioning the name of Maurice Barrès, who, beginning his career as a Stirneresque ego-worshipper, later developed the line of blood-and-soil mystical patriotism which produced such curious results among the French upper and middle classes during the recent war. Gide was, in Barrès sense, "deracinate." He was born in Paris of the union of a Norman Catholic and a meridional Protestant family. "Deracinate" he therefore chose to be, and it is amusing to see how, throughout his work and not only in the *Journals*, he continues to nag at Barrès. Let the blood-stream pump as it will, Gide's own authority must come from the head, and his region will be the whole world, its generations the phases of civilisation.

The Gide of these first *Journals* is a pianist, a gardener, a bridegroom, a traveller, an indefatigable member of the best circles, a founder of the *Nouvelle Revue Française*, a stylist, a translator and a Christian. As late as 1912, he writes, "How easy it would be for me now to throw myself into a confessional!" He denounces Switzerland: "The admiration of mountains is an invention of Protestantism. Strange confusion, on the part of brains incapable of art, between the lofty and the beautiful." Elsewhere he grows angry at Claudel's inability to take the words of Christ literally.

In this wonderful presentation of a period, the minor figures I myself find most engaging are the sad, defeated piano-teacher and Mme. Gide (Emmanuele Rondeaux, a first cousin), her presence, both early and late, a delicately tender evocation which I do not think Gide could have managed in fiction and which he did not manage in the early *Cahiers d'André Walter*, where he writes of her, as of himself, by her real Christian name. I like, too, the continual exasperation afforded Gide by the temperaments of two of his most distinguished contemporaries, the bloody-minded Remy de Gourmont, the vain and insensitive Francis Jammes. There are also the first African travels and the moving account of the death of Charles-Louis Philippe formerly published in *Nouveaux Prétextes*.

Professor O'Brien's translation is rarely marred by such Americanisms as "right now," "stop off," and "winning out," and it may be one's own fault if, while applauding the sentiment, one just fails to gather what is meant by a youthful entry which speaks of renouncing dreams and leading "a vigorous and fulsome life" or this later generalisation: "No matter how robust it is, our appetite broad-jumps over unqualifiable courses." Professor O'Brien has added some useful documentation of his own, though it is possible that one or two of his footnotes insult the reader. I would not myself expect to see this book in the hands of anyone who did not know that *Wilhelm Meister* was by Goethe or *The Fall of the House of Ussher* by Edgar Allan Poe.

RAYNER HEPPENSTALL.

ASSORTED CRIMES

Close Quarters. By MICHAEL GILBERT. *Hodder & Stoughton.* 8s. 6d.

Clue Sinister. By CAROL CARNAC. *Macdonald.* 8s. 6d.

New Graves at Great Norne. By HENRY WADE. *Constable.* 9s. 6d.

Murder by Accident. By LEONIE MASON. *C. & J. Temple.* 8s. 6d.

The Unsuspected. By CHARLOTTE ARMSTRONG. *Harrap.* 8s. 6d.

A Man About a Dog. By ALEC COPPEL. *Harrap.* 8s. 6d.

Verdict of Twelve. By RAYMOND POSTGATE. *Michael Joseph.* 8s. 6d.

Forty-nine Chances. By JULIET RHYS-WILLIAMS. *Rich & Cowan.* 9s. 6d.

The Big Clock. By KENNETH FEARING. *Bodley Head.* 7s. 6d.

Too Busy to Die. By H. W. RODEN. *Hammond.* 8s. 6d.

The Title is Murder. By HUGH L. NELSON. *Arthur Barker.* 7s. 6d.

Everybody Makes Mistakes. By M. S. MARBLE. *Arthur Barker.* 7s. 6d.

This assortment contains the usual varieties, but with more than its fair share of *fondants*, the crimes that melt in the mouth without any problems for mastication. In the top layer of hard centres *Close Quarters* has genuine stickjaw quality for those who like it—as I do. Mr. Michael Gilbert is a new writer of detection, and has determined to make an out-and-out teaser of his first effort. The crime is the murder of the head verger of Melchester Cathedral inside the Cathedral Close; and you can pick your murderer from the Dean, four Canons, four Minor Canons, and seven other residents within the precincts. Three plans of the Close are provided; and one chapter describes the solving of a cross-word puzzle, with diagrams. The characters and dialogue are amusing; while the ring of confidence in the style is only natural, when the author knows his plot is armour-plated and his readers are just barking their knuckles against it. Altogether *Close Quarters* makes a solid mouthful to chew through and appreciate at leisure. But you won't *detect* the criminal; and the odds are 8 to 1 against your guessing him. How, then, if there are no clues, is the crime ever solved? That is exactly Mr. Michael Gilbert's quandary. With infinite trouble he has concocted a fool-proof murder; and then has to spoil his creation to provide a solution. Another time—for Mr. Gilbert's talent deserves every encouragement—he will do better to remember the axiom that crimes in fiction are there to be solved by the acumen of the reader, and not by the kind permission of the author.

The other three representatives of detection are less original in plot. The *Clue Sinister* is supposed to solve the murder of a black marketeer in Westmorland. (A map of the district as frontispiece should help one to pick one's way round the fells; but, in fact, is so crudely drawn as to be misleading and should not be taken too seriously.) The story ambles easily through long stretches of dialect—"a gey girt mess an' all" is how one character describes it—and the sinister clue itself comes to light through a neat piece of deduction by Chief Inspector Rivers. But, for the sophisticated, the case was closed long before. The villain arrived on the scene wearing a halo of guilt such as no subsequent red herrings could ever mitigate.

Henry Wade is a respected name, which has been too long absent from the list. His *New Graves at Great Norne*, however, will not add much to his reputation. This succession of murders in East Anglia comes to a lame ending in the murderer's deathbed confession, with all our efforts at rational deduction wasted. A disappointment, for which the odd characters and facility of style are poor compensation.

Miss Leonie Mason's first dabble in detection has elicited a vivacious little roadhouse murder; but she must be more wary of her cunning old customers, if she hopes to get away with it. *Murder by Accident's* infectious high spirits cannot blind us to Miss Mason's borrowing a trick of detection that has seen at least twenty years' service and has been used so often that it simply acts as signpost to the murderer. But, for all that, it is a pleasure to share in the author's enthusiasm for *Murder by Accident*.

Next comes the soft centres and *fondants*, the layer of sheer self-indulgence. Of the five novels, in which no attempt is made to puzzle the reader, *The Unsuspected* can be guaranteed to provide some excitement. How will the smooth old villain, who has murdered his ward so inconspicuously, ever be brought to book? Miss Armstrong reminds one of Ethel Lina White in her power of keeping up that requisite state of tension, which publishers love to call "agonising suspense."

A Man About a Dog supplies a sadistic fantasy for jealous husbands. If your wife has been unfaithful, you may like to toy with the idea of chaining her lover in a cellar; then torment him leisurely for several months, until it is time to liquidate him with acid and pour him down the drain.

Verdict of Twelve was originally published here in 1940, at a time when we were awaiting the verdict in a more murderous trial. In America the novelty of presenting murder from the standpoint of the members of the jury, in a dry, dispassionate style, had an immediate success. On re-reading, Mr. Postgate is no Dostoevsky: his characters have melodramatic justification but carry no inner conviction. The twist in the *dénouement*, however, comes off better than I remembered it. The reprint will be welcome to those who missed the book at its first outing.

How a distinguished Harley Street surgeon is cajoled into signing a false death certificate for a Nazi spy, and how he only just manages to live to regret it, is the theme of *Forty-nine Chances*—a competent specimen of sentimental thriller. Mr. Kenneth Fearing is an American with an attractive style and some originality. In *The Big Clock* the hero happens to see his employer entering a lady's flat to murder her. Next day he is given

the ironical job of tracking himself down as the unknown witness of the crime. Why not go straight to the police? Well, that would hardly be fair to his author, who intends to develop the artificial situation into a nerve-wracking chase ending with suicide from the top of a skyscraper.

Finally, the bottom layer of half-bakes—thrillers that use a smattering of detection to justify their existence. All three are American. *Too Busy to Die* is the standard article, composed of alternate slugs of whisky and lead, with some soppy sex thrown in for relaxation. *The Title is Murder* has a Californian book-shop background for a carefully calculated killing. *Everybody Makes Mistakes* chases its tail round Hollywood rather dizzily. The motive: "I had to kill him so that I could stop being that way" strikes a new, and rather pathological, note of absurdity.

RALPH PARTRIDGE

MERRY ENGLAND

The English Festivals. LAWRENCE WHISTLER. *Heinemann.* 12*s.* 6*d.*

The hysteria evoked by spasmodic royal parades suggests that there is still an unfulfilled need for ritual in contemporary life. In a well-produced and interesting book Mr. Whistler discusses the possibilities of reviving the traditional feast-days which survive under the surface of the year and are to be found listed in the drearier pages of the Book of Common Prayer. The number and variety of these feasts—he describes in detail a cycle of 25 beginning with Christmas Eve and ending with St. Cecilia's Day—establishes that in its heyday the calendar had more personality though the very intricacies and vigour of each ceremonial suggest a devastating boredom in between.

The festivals are almost all, he reminds us, of great antiquity. Society has always existed in several dimensions with survivals from one age encumbering, dominating or resisting the next. The rituals of very ancient societies continued under Christianity and not only Christmas and Easter but also the lowbrow Guy Fawkes Day had intimate associations with the Dying God, Harvest or the life and death of the Seasons, annual crises at which the death of a sacrificial victim sustained public morale. Guy Fawkes, it appears, through his very failure, gave new life to an ancient fire-festival in decay by presenting himself as a new victim or scapegoat to be destroyed and, unconsciously, adored. Again, the Church mitigated the old Roman habit of choosing by lot a girl to debauch at the Lupercalia by substituting in the box the name of a saint to be worshipped, in the same way that at Candlemas the old fire-worshippers' torches had been replaced by the more decorous candles. The girls, however, defended their perquisites more spiritedly than the torches had done, though now under the patronage of St. Valentine; some grosser parts of the ritual still enlivened the 18th century. It was left to the Post Office to establish the saint's day in its present rather unexacting form. Twelfth Night, too, had its spectacle: a mock-king would originally be sacrificed to the fertility gods, this leading to an association with the Magi and, in the Middle Ages with the hilarity regulated by the King of the Bean: on this day also the custom of banging buckets and shooting at branches to bestir the new sun survived into modern times.

It is these survivals that perhaps make the most suggestive reading. On May Day the Furry Dance is still held at Helston, in Cornwall, the people dancing in and out of the streets and houses to bring home the Summer, while "Gardens of Adonis," as old as the oldest Mediterranean culture, were seen on Hammersmith pavements on the Eve of Good Friday, 1944, echoes of the mourning for the Spring God by whose death, the essence of Tragedy, the world and himself gained new life. The Church, the author points out, has latterly encouraged a revival of Plough Sunday, Harvest Festival, and Rogation-Tide, the day on which the bounds are beaten, the tears of the flagellated choir-boys once, I suppose, restoring vitality to the earth. He suggests that its connection with Shakespeare may encourage a national revival of St. George's Day, and it is true that our remarkable inheritance of Easter Carols could help, quite as much as the importing of Danish eggs, in restoring the rather sagging Easter. Poets and artists, furthermore, could certainly collaborate in producing a presentable Christmas card. St. Cecilia's Day seems actually to be reviving, as an excuse for æsthetic activity, an experiment which might be equally well repeated for Midsummer Eve, a very primitive fire-festival made respectable by a quite fortuitous connection with John the Baptist. Where once the torches waved and the wheel spun blazing down the hill, fireworks could stimulate, if no longer the Sun, at least the human eye which is to-day silted with so much mediocrity.

> Fireworks [Mr. Whistler writes] are among the purest expressions of joy that are possible to man. Supremely useless like singing and dancing, they are even briefer than a song or a figure, and by their brevity move us the more. They have no flavour of eternity like music and certain buildings, for they are this world's joy, haunted and sharpened by impermanence. And they shock us. They startle our dullness and release us from our caution.

The author's exact knowledge of festal procedure gilds the days when the "merry" English were famous for their music, homes and indiscriminate kissing. At Whitsun, when an old mummer once received "for setting the world on fire, 4d." it was apparently thought best to dance "like devils incarnate" with hobby-horses within the church itself and, in commemoration of the early Christian Agapae, to spend the week in "drunkennesse, whordom, gluttonie and other filthie Sodomiticall exercyses." To the devout traditionalist a girl at All-Hallows should still eat an apple while combing her hair, to ensure the face of her future husband glimmering in the mirror; and on New Year's Day the New Sun, disguised as a stranger carrying evergreens, should knock on one's door and be greeted with cake, wine and a silver coin. It is at this point that considerable possibilities for future Tory Conferences stream without very much effort into the mind of at least one reader.

However, as Mr. Whistler himself observes, quaintness damns, and not only does a national revival of most of these festivals seem unlikely unless a new barbarism creates a policy of superstition but one wonders whether the Christmas Spirit has not slightly fuddled his own historical imagination. While it is interesting to know that the Turkey was imported from Mexico about 1542, that Mrs. Pepys washed in the dew at 4 a.m. on May Morning to make herself beautiful, and that Simnel Cakes are named from "Similia" (finest wheat flour) rather than from Lambert, the Church's assimilation of ancient

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rites was not always so gentle as these sedate pages suggest. The persecution of heretics, witches and pagans discloses a terrifying current of social and sexual conflict to which the festivals should surely be as much related. To this day the Burning of the Guy and the symbolism of the Maypole arouse complex and often disturbing sensations.

PETER VANSITTART

CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Ponies and Poachers. By DAVID SEVERN. *Bodley Head.* 7s. 6d.

Hua Ma the Flower Pony. By CECILIA KNOWLES. *Falcon Press.* 8s. 6d.

Cranes Flying South. N. KARAZIN. *Puffin Books.* 1s. 6d.

Trumpets in the West. By GEOFFREY TREASE. *Blackwell.* 6s.

Columbus Sails. By C. WALTER HODGES. *Puffin Books.* 1s. 6d.

Quest for Romance. By FREDERICK COWLES. *Mariner Press.* 7s.

South Country Secrets. By "EUPHAN" and "KLAXON." *Puffin Books.* 1s. 6d.

Bonfires and Broomsticks. By MARY NORTON. *Dent.* 7s. 6d.

Bunkle Breaks Away. By M. PARDOE. *Routledge.* 7s. 6d.

Jam Tomorrow. By MONICA REDLICH. *Puffin Books.* 1s. 6d.

The Mirrors of Castle Doone. By ELISABETH KYLE. *Peter Davies.* 8s. 6d.

Fictional children in search of an author might like to take a note of the season's qualifications. It does not do to be pathetic. Parents are better alive but away. Brothers and sisters are more fashionable than cousins this year, but it is still a good idea to be the youngest. Unless you can ride a horse few authors will give you a second thought; (this is important.) And never be seen with a book. On rainy days you can clean the harness or look for that secret passage. You can't all hope to discover criminals; some of you will have to put up with uncles who take you round parts of England (generally Sussex) teaching you history or botany. It is no use Ellen Montgomery applying, change her name as she will, but Alice, so practical and independent, stands a much better chance. Amy and Meg are the most likely of the Marches; a spoilt child is always useful for the others to work on, and domestic science will take you further than writing poetry. Boys haven't changed so much, allowing for the advance in science.

Take Joan, the heroine of *Ponies and Poachers*. She wears "stained, blotchy jods" and a faded old tweed coat, not only because her father is a doctor and is poor. "She is a girl you could really *do* things with," her brother is good enough to think, and together they ride, rescue, poach and discover thieves. Horse-children should approve, particularly (as I do) of the detailed descriptions; but it might be safer not to give the book to anyone whose father owns a game preserve. *Hua Ma* keeps to the horse's story. A spotted pony of great charm is captured in the Gobi Desert; his adventures take him to England by way of California, and more than once he is in a circus. This is an honest and sympathetic book. Also about the animal world is *Cranes Flying South*, a beautiful account of a bird's migration journey from the great marshes north of Moscow to the Nile beyond Khartoum.

History. "Warn the boy that, at the first sign of drunkenness or dicing or wenching, out he goes. And to bring with him sufficient stockings." This is part of a letter from Jack Norwood's aunt in *Trumpets in the West*. Guns are thundering over the Mendips as Jack leaves for London to become a musician, for it is the time of Monmouth's rebellion. Mr. Trease's history is reliable and he tells a good story. Purcell comes into this one, and his opera Dido and Aeneas, which was written for a girls' school. Here, too, is another excellent Penguin: *Columbus Sails*. The narrative of the great journey is given by a monk and by a sailor of the ship's company. Any author under the delusion that good writing makes dull reading should be sent a copy of this exciting book. In *Quest for Romance* a group of young children are told stories about towns and villages in England. Some, like those of Caedmon and Bladud, are true. But—I quote from the dust jacket—"when there is no particular story associated with a place the Story Man promptly invents one to suit the occasion." What is worse, authentic explanations of place names are mixed with facetious inventions. A pity, for the ballad-like poems interspersed might have an old-fashioned appeal. *South Country Secrets* is a competent book in which four children from South Africa are shown the historical parts of Southern England. In the intervals they ride horses. The information is good; the children (like most people to whom nothing happens but adventures) never become interesting.

The last group is of novels, which do not set out to teach anything—except in the case of *Bonfires and Broomsticks*, a little necromancy, which is, after all, not a school subject. Was it really a *bicycle* that Miss Price was riding that night two years ago? I highly approve of this book, in which journeys, when they are not undertaken on broomsticks, are made sensibly on a bed with a magic knob, under the direction of Miss Price, who is learning to be a witch. Not only do Carey, Charles and Paul travel into the past, but they bring back a seventeenth-century apothecary to have a look over present-day England. But why has the artist drawn such unattractive children? Better no illustrations than the wrong ones.

I cannot imagine a more disheartening setting than the servants' quarters of a Thames-side hotel in a rainy January. Yet *Bunkle Breaks Away*, though it is one of the dampest books I have read, is a cheerful story. Bunkle, who is a boy, takes a temporary post at the Blue Boys, near Maidenhead; floods, jewel thefts and difficult guests fill up the short time of his stay. The best chapter describes his afternoon off with the little kitchenmaid, when he tries to convince her that the best people wear old clothes. *Jam Tomorrow* is a mild book about a fairly grown-up family (one of them becomes engaged at the end; another goes to Cambridge). There is a good deal of triumph over dismissing a difficult maid-of-all-work, and a good deal of implied congratulation to the several young people who share her duties. The book that I should most like to post to myself (assuming a post that goes backwards a sufficient number of years) is *The Mirrors of Castle Doone*. Castle Doone, up in Scotland, is "unchancy after mirk," but a group of really nice children discover its ancient secret. One of them is a little American girl who, I should judge, has never heard of Hollywood. Her name is Karin Cloot. Some of them camp out in a ruined village, dig tunnels, but there is something unfamiliar about them. Not a Gosh, not a Golly decorates their speech. They do not own a pony. And one of the camping boys pores over a book for several minutes—though it is, if I remember rightly, by Mrs. Beeton.

NAOMI LEWIS

The Child is Right. By JAMES HEMMING and JOSEPHINE BABS. *Lohgmans.* 6s.

The provocative title, whose intention can be so easily distorted, will put many people off reading a book that they might really find helpful. Nothing has suffered so badly from the decay of the traditions

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than education and the up-bringing of children. Teachers and parents are thrown back on their own resources and those who have most thoroughly kicked over the tradition traces are just those who find it most difficult to replace them with something constructive. This title book does help to fill the gap it claims to. Instead of offering pages of good general advice it offers pages of little "case histories," examples of misunderstanding between parents and children which end in "rows," tears, tantrums and suggests how a different attitude might have ended them better, or a larger sympathy and a wiser insight have prevented them. Parents who are sympathetic to the psychological approach but don't quite know how to apply it should find this book particularly useful. They will also find that "psychology" is a great deal less formidable to understand and to apply than they may have been led to believe.

Week-end Competitions

No. 931

Set by Raymond Mortimer

Six guineas are offered for English versions of the following lines. Entries by January 6th.

Si je perds bien des maitresses,
J'en fais encore plus souvent
Et mes voeux et mes promesses
Ne sont que feintes caresses,
Et mes voeux et mes promesses
Ne sont jamais que du vent.

Quand je vois un beau visage,
Soudain, je me fais de feu ;
Mais longtemps lui faire hommage,
Ce n'est pas bien mon usage,
Mais longtemps lui faire hommage,
Ce n'est pas bien là mon jeu.

Plus inconstant que la lune,
Je ne veux jamais d'arrêt :
La blonde comme la brune,
En moins de rien m'importune
La blonde comme la brune,
En moins de rien me déplait.

No. 932

Set by Sebastian

The usual prizes are offered for a clerihew on a figure in English history. Entries by January 6th.

RESULT OF COMPETITION No. 928

Set by T. C. Worsley

The usual prizes are offered for a Grace to be said before Christmas dinner.

Report by T. C. Worsley

Greed curtailed dominated the imaginations of competitors and thanks were, as E. W. Fordham put it, proportionately "half-hearted." But they were directed at the middlemen rather than the Original Supplier who, it was generally agreed, might do better next time or the time after. W. Stewart, J. Fitzgerald, Nan, E. A. Doddmead, Rat, Round Robin, Boffin Maximus, J. O. M. Harrod, E. Bedwell, Kim—all of these sent entries that would have earned quotation in a week when the level was less high. I suggest a half-guinea to each of the first twelve entries.

O Lord, we thank Thee for that which we have; and, to the end that we may the more enjoy the same, grant us to forget that which we have not. JAMES

Some ha'e meat, and canna eat ;
Some ha'e nane, and want it—
And in these days of austerity, as, O Lord, Thou hast seen in *The Times*, we are in the second category ; wherefore, O Lord, if Thou canst give this matter Thine urgent attention when, as the result of our prayers, it is taken into Higher Channels, then
When we ha'e meat, and we can eat,
Let the Lord be thankit. GUY INNES

Matthew, Mark and Strachey (John)
Bless the board that I look on
And strengthen me, in time, to say,
"I've had enough, no more to-day."
C. S. COOK

We thank Thee, O Lord, for not permitting to be taken away with one hand (via the gas supply) what hath been provided by the other (via the butcher).

Also (so far as the pudding is concerned) for what some of us are about to retrieve may the Lord make us truly thankful. MICHAEL BROOKE

From what we ought not to receive, because of the needs of the starving, good Lord deliver us.
PRYKIE

Thank God who on this holy day
Has steered us from temptation's way,
And in His loving kindness banned
The surfeit once by sinners planned ;
Who, reprehending Christmas greed,
Restricts us now to what we need.
Praise Him who sends us for our good
A cautious Minister of Food. Amen.
ALLAN M. LAING

Let us rejoice to-day for the gifts of Christmas, remembering the Wise Men of the East who gave no information, nor counted the cost. L. M. J.

We thank Thee, Lord, for this our food,
For food of any kind is good.
But more that we have shed the fears
That threatened us in other years.
A prim sufficiency we see ;
The table groans not, nor shall we.
S. W. H.

For what we are lawfully about to receive, may the Lord make us truly thankful. For some few other things we are about to receive, may it suffice Him to know that we have already been appropriately thankful.
JOHN GRANT

Lord, Who didst eat with publican and sinner,
Greet those old cronies at Thy birthday dinner,
And, as at Cana Thou didst give a sign,
Make our cold water taste, this once, like wine.
L. E. J.

Oh Lorrrd—

Bless this hoose
And this wee goose.
(Nae sae big as Rabbie's moose.)

May that wan tattie
Keep us fattie,
Jock and Jean and Auntie Mattie.

This tinned plum pudden
That I'm huddin'
Dinna let it be a dud'n.

Ma supplication
For the Nation—
Oh, gie us, Lord, a bigger ration !
ELLEN VINCENT

Impartial arbitress of chance's law,
Late supervisor of our Christmas draw,
Accept our strictly moderated thanks
For not rewarding us with total blanks.
But why, O Fortune, goddess of the lot,
Send such a very little to our pot ?
LESLIE JOHNSON

Lord by Thee our praise be heard
For this somewhat scraggy bird.
We applaud Thee, without passion
For the week's potato ration ;
Ministering angels see—
Minions of the Ministry. N. P. MEADWAY

Thank the Powers that Be to-day
For the food that came our way.
Lord knows how and whence it came,
Who to praise and who to blame.
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DUCHESS. Tem. 8243. Evgs. (ex. Dec. 24) 7. Thur., Sat., 2.30. Lewis Casson, Sybil Thorndike in "The Linden Tree," by J. B. Priestley. A London Mask Theatre Production. Directed by Michael Macowan.

MERCURY, Park 5700. "Kate Kennedy." Evs. 7. Boxing Day, Sat., 2.30.

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ARTS (Tem. 7541). Evgs. (ex. Mon.), 7. Sat. & Sun., 5 & 8. Boxing Day, 2.30. "Pride Shall Have a Fall." Mems.

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ST. Pancras Town Hall (opp. St. Pancras Stn.). Sun., Dec. 28, 7.30 p.m. Tomford Harris and The London Singers directed by Norman Lilly in a special programme of Xmas music, etc. Tkts. from Hall, 2s. 6d. to 6s. 6d.

BRIT.-Czechosl. Friendship League, 20 Pont St. S.W.1. Wed., Dec. 31. New Year's Eve Dance. Members and their guests.

Exhibitions

GALLERY Jabe, 76 Wigmore St. W.1. Christmas Show of British Painters, Nudes and Flowers from £5.

VAN Gogh. An exhibition of paintings and drawings arranged by the Arts Council of Great Britain. Tate Gallery, Dec. 10 to Jan. 14. Weekdays 10 to 6, Sunday 2 to 6. Closed Christmas Eve; open Boxing Day. Adm., Mon. to Fri., 1s. Children 6d. Sat. and Sun. free.

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FOYLES Art Gallery. Ukrainian Folk Art from Slave Labour Camps & D.P. Camps. 9-6 dly. until Jan. 10 (inc. Sats.). Adm. free.

Lectures and Meetings

THEOSOPHY, Public Lecture, Sundays, 7 p.m. United Lodge of Theosophists, 17 Gt. Cumberland Place, Marble Arch. All welcome. Dec. 28, Reincarnation (in Christian Scriptures).

ETHICAL Church, Queensway, W.2, at 11 o'clock. Dec. 28, H. J. Blackham: "Egoism and Altruism in Morals."

SHAW Society: Presidential Address by D. R. Hardman, Feb. 3. Details of all activities: 80c Croftdown Rd. N.W.5.

LECTURES on Marriage and Preparation for Marriage arranged by the London Marriage Guidance Council begins early Jan., 1948, at Kingsway Hall. Further partics. from Sec., 78 Duke St. Grosvenor Sq. W.1.

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